THE UTILIZATION OF MILD DISABILITIES SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: The Utilization of Mild Disabilities Special Education Teachers in Elementary Schools

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The purpose of this exploratory study was to compare the perceptions of principals, special education administrators, and mild disabilities special education teachers about how special education teachers are used within the elementary school setting across Indiana. Surveys including two open-ended questions were sent to participants. Statistical analysis indicated there were significant differences among participants for the constructs of support, time/scheduling, and professional development issues facing mild disabilities special education teachers. Further factor analysis showed significant differences among participants for specific survey items from the roles, support, time/scheduling, and professional development data sets. Qualitative analysis revealed participants noted the following as barriers: time/scheduling, caseload, and building level expectations. Results also indicated mild disabilities special education teachers were used as: an interventionist, a team member, or a consultant. Mild disabilities special education teachers have an expanded role and there may be barriers to using them effectively. Recommendations include consideration of professional development opportunities for collaboration between general education and special education teachers, further investigation of special education teacher roles and responsibilities, and discussion of time and scheduling issues.

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CHAPTER ONE

Since the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act, education has changed for all Indiana students. It has been reported that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 required that all students, including special education students, have increased engagement with grade level curriculum (Harvey, Yssel, Buaserman, & Merbler, 2010). Schools are responsible for showing that all students are learning and that teachers are using research based methods to teach students. Indiana monitors elementary school progress through the use of the ISTEP+ and IREAD assessments. In the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy report, Plucker et al. (2008) reported it is vital for Indiana to pinpoint strategies that allow students to prosper with academics, earn high school diplomas, and be equipped to enter the workplace or postsecondary education.

There is a continuum of available services when planning for school improvement which is known as Response to Intervention (RtI) and in Indiana it is called Response to Instruction (RtI). The Indiana Department of Education (2010) noted the RtI process involves providing direct academic interventions for identified learners. Response to Instruction (RtI) is part of a collaborative process used to assist academically struggling students before it is determined that special education services are necessary. According to Hazelkorn, Bucholz, Goodman, Duffy, and Brady (2011), "typically, RtI models are multi-tiered with at least three tiers: (1) Tier 1 is the use of universal high-quality instruction, and assessment is provided to all students in general education" (p.18). Teachers and school administrators work together and develop a plan to improve learning for failing students. General education teachers are expected to use research based practices within their classrooms. These teachers teach, assess students, differentiate instruction, and monitor progress. When students do not respond to instructional efforts and

classroom interventions, the teacher may refer the student to a student assistance team and Tier 2 interventions.

Students may be involved in Tier 2 interventions when they demonstrate difficulty engaging with the curriculum. Teachers within schools team up and develop research-based interventions for students who are not successful with the curriculum. During the RtI process teaching staff employ intervention strategies using research-based materials and practices as well as changes to curriculum to encourage attainment of individual learning goals; these may include creative scheduling and resource allocation (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). Teacher assistance teams may request assistance from mild disabilities special education teachers, who serve students ranging from moderate to mild. The special education teacher may assist general education students who might otherwise be lost because they struggle with grade level curriculum (Beckman, 2001) when the special education teacher is in the general education classroom assisting special education students. Not all students who have special education needs are eligible under Article 7 for direct services from the special education teacher through an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Schools are challenged to educate these students and raise their test scores so the school can meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goals.

Tier 3 interventions are the most intensive type of curriculum extensions and are intended to meet the individual needs of students failing to grasp grade level curriculum (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). Students who require Tier 3 interventions may eventually be evaluated for special education services. Those students who require special education services should have gone through the RtI process before being identified. Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker (2010) reported that many in special education believe "that special education's proper purpose should be to blend itself into the new, tiered structure of general education" (p. 306). This

implies that mild disabilities special education teachers and general education teachers should work together as team members assisting at-risk students. Teacher teams engaging in the RtI process could include mild disabilities special education teachers who might have ideas to assist struggling general education students.

Special education students have been included more and more in the educational mainstream. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), school systems are required to teach students with identified disabilities in the general education setting with general education students as much as possible (Plucker et al., 2008). Collaboration between special education and general education teachers has become an important issue for schools. Lipsky (2003) summarized special education as "a service, not a place or program to which students are sent. The systemic goal is to transform the whole district into a unified educational system" (p. 1). Special education does not necessarily mean that students are "pulled out" to receive additional academic support. It has become increasingly challenging for Indiana schools to educate students with special educational needs within the general classroom setting because schools are held accountable for academic progress as measured by state testing, graduation rates, and most recently the growth model. Special education and general education teachers need to meet the needs of special education and other struggling students within the school. There is additional stress upon the special education teacher when that collaboration does not take place or is ineffective.

In Indiana, many special education students are required to take the ISTEP+ test and fewer students are exempt from testing. It has been noted that when identified special education students do not take part in statewide testing meant to assist schools with program development, there would not be any data available to assist those schools and school districts (Wenning,

Herdman & Smith, 2004). Schools cannot ignore the inclusion of special education students in the general curriculum or in accountability testing measures. This puts additional pressure on school personnel when making plans to improve student performance. It seems that special and regular education teachers should be encouraged by the principal and special education directors to formally collaborate in order to help their students educationally move forward.

The principal is increasingly required to lead the development of strategies to help struggling students succeed. In an article discussing the coexistence of high standards and inclusion, Dorothy Lipsky (2003) discusses the need for district leadership when developing a plan for a school. She reports that the leader must "1) work with all stakeholder groups to develop a shared vision of a unified system; 2) support a planning process to re-examine past practices; 3) secure resources for the needed changes; and 4) monitor initiatives to ensure progress, to make midcourse corrections and to sustain momentum" (p. 1). Building level administrators have an ever increasing responsibility when it comes to the educational outcomes of all students within their building. It is logical that building administrators encourage the use of all building resources when creating plans for adequate yearly progress. These resources include mild disabilities special education teachers. The principal and staff need to determine how those human resources should be effectively used. Researchers report new and experienced teaching staff may be confused about special education teacher roles in the elementary school setting (Billingsley, 2004). If there is no plan or discussion of the roles, mild disabilities special education teachers may experience problems.

McGregor and Prom report that "current research suggests that general educators are still more likely to interact collaboratively with other general educators than with special education staff" (as cited in Sharpe and Hawes, 2003, p. 4). If grade level teachers collaborate with each

other to create a plan to help failing general education students, does the special education teacher have a role? It is logical that the special education teacher would be a fundamental part of any planning of educational strategies to help special education students improve educational outcomes. It makes sense that this resource would be used when faculties gather to plan for educational improvements that include special and general education students.

Are there perceived barriers that prohibit collaboration between general and mild disabilities special education teachers? In 2002, the President's Commission on Excellence advocated for general education teachers to become knowledgeable about special education (Sharpe & Hawes, 2003). Again, it seems reasonable that mild disabilities special education and general education teachers would be encouraged to collaborate when students' educational outcomes were planned. This collaboration would enable general education teachers and mild disabilities special education teachers to learn more about each discipline and share student and intervention information. Elementary schools may have school wide planning teams responsible for developing systematic plans for improving the school. It seems that principals would want mild disabilities special education teachers as part of those school planning teams because of their expertise. Sometimes mild disabilities special education teachers do not feel supported because they are not asked to be a part of collaborative efforts. Some research has suggested that many mild disabilities special education teachers perceive that their varied roles and responsibilities are not clearly understood by building level administrators and general education personnel (Kaff, 2005). Mild disabilities special education teachers may feel as if they are considered to be an assistant instead of an educational colleague of the general education teaching staff. Unfortunately, research has indicated there are problems retaining mild disabilities special education teachers in the schools (DeMik, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The problem I am investigating is whether mild disabilities special education teachers are pulled in too many directions and may not be utilized in the most efficient way when schools plan for improving students' educational outcomes. As a result, some may leave their teaching positions because they do not feel valued by other building staff and administrators. A new challenge exists in the educational community. "Improved student learning requires teachers, schools and districts to give up unproductive traditions and beliefs, replacing them with validated practices and a full understanding of the intent of the law" (Beckman, 2001, p. 2). The mild disabilities special education teacher is an important stakeholder within the school community who has specialized knowledge. Should mild disabilities special education teachers be an integral part of the planning process because the special education teacher and general education teacher share equal responsibility for a special education student's academic outcome (Beckman, 2001)?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study was to compare the perceptions of principals, special education directors, and mild disabilities special education teachers about how special education teachers are used within the elementary school setting.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it investigated the perceptions of special education teachers, special education directors, and principals concerning how mild disabilities special education teachers are utilized at the elementary school. When addressing special education teacher retention, it has been found that information gathered from experienced teachers may assist in the identification of areas that require modification so that mild disabilities special education teachers will remain in the field (Jennings Otto, 2006). It is important to understand

how mild disabilities special education teachers are used so that efforts can be made to properly support them, cultivate their skills, and retain them as useful resources. It is important for schools to be able to take full advantage of the special skills that these teachers develop so that all students have the opportunity to achieve academic success.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the study were as follows:

1. What role expectations exist for mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?
2. What barriers exist concerning the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?

Delimitations

The delimitations placed on this study were:

1. Elementary school mild disabilities special education teachers regardless of years of experience were surveyed.
2. Building principals regardless of years of experience were used in this study.
3. Special education directors who were program directors regardless of years of experience were sent surveys.
4. Public elementary schools (K-5th or K-6th grade) were used in the study.
5. An unbalanced population was used because there was more than one mild disabilities special education teacher at an elementary school and a limited number of special education directors were available for the subject population.

Definitions

Article 7: It is Indiana's version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is the state's special education act which delineates what things need to happen for special

education students. It is a set of special education guidelines and safeguards for students, families, and teachers.

AYP: It is an acronym used for Annual Yearly Progress. It is used to judge the progress of a school in educating its students as part of the No Child Left Behind Act. A school is put into a category of making progress or needing help; various steps in developing a plan for further progress are put in place dependent upon the AYP category.

Caseload: The number of students that a special education teacher services through an Individualized Educational Plan.

Collaboration: The planning between two or more teachers on the strategies used to assist a student in the general education setting.

Elementary School: A school with a kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade population.

Governance Type: There are four special education governance types: single, interlocal, cooperative, and joint services. Each school system's special education services are governed by one of these types.

Growth Model: Used in Indiana; it compares individual students who started at the same level of achievement to determine relative yearly growth. It is proposed to be used to further evaluate teachers within a school.

IDEA: The acronym for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It is the federal special education act which delineates what things need to happen for special education students. It is a set of special education guidelines and safeguards for students, families, and teachers.

IEP: Individualized Educational Plan is a document that shows a student's academic strengths and weaknesses. It is an academic plan for the student which delineates accommodations, modifications, and academic goals for special education students.

ISTEP+: Indiana's yearly test used to assess each school for annual yearly progress.

No Child Left Behind Act: It may also be referred to as NCLB. It is a United States Act of Congress passed in 2001. It concerns the education of children in public schools. The NCLB Act requires states to develop assessments for students in certain grades if they want to receive federal funding.

Pull-Out: Students are taken out of the general education classroom to receive additional academic assistance.

Push In: When a mild disabilities special education teacher works in the general education classroom setting alongside the general education teacher assisting students with classroom work.

Response to Intervention (RtI or RTI): A research based intervention plan developed for struggling general education students done prior to determining the need for special education students. The Indiana Department of Education refers to this term as Response to Instruction.

Special Education Student: A student who is mainstreamed with the general education population who has an IEP for academic subjects. A student who is expected to learn from the regular curriculum, although it may be modified. A student who is expected to take the ISTEP+ exam with or without accommodations. A student who also may or may not also have speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, or physical therapy services.

Special Education Teacher: A mild disabilities special education teacher or a special education teacher who works with students who are in general education for at least 75% of their school day. They work with students who will take the ISTEP+ exam with or without accommodations.

SET: Acronym used for the term Special Education Teacher.

Qualify: A term used to indicate that a student is eligible to receive special education services because that student meets certain requirements under the special education law.

Summary

Mild disabilities special education teachers are a valuable resource in a school. This study focused on how those teachers are used, and what possible barriers exist while trying to access their expertise. While working in the field of special education, teachers are expected to consistently implement a variety of skills (Eichinger, 2000); therefore, it is important to understand how the special education teacher is used within the educational setting. In order for special education services to be effective, all teachers, special education directors, and principals must work together and value what each brings to the planning table.

Principals and special education directors need to think about how mild disabilities special education teachers interact with general education teachers within schools because they are concerned with the educational outcomes of all of the students. Boscardin, Mainzer, and Kealy (2011) asserted "administrators play a significant role by providing leadership that translates into academic success" (p. 76). It is important to know how a resource like a mild disabilities special education teacher can be efficiently used in a school. It may be important to understand that the mild disabilities special education teacher is not just another person who works directly with students, but a source of ideas for the general education teacher and school improvement teams. It is important to discover how mild disabilities special education teachers are used, what their perceived roles are, and what barriers exist when they attempt to collaborate with other teachers. If mild disabilities special education teachers do not feel valued within the school setting, it is likely they will seek employment elsewhere.

Much research has been done over the years to explore the relationships between general education and mild disabilities special education teachers. As the education of all students moves forward and teachers are held accountable for all of the students within their

classes, it is also important to understand how all teachers are used within the building. If schools are to cultivate and use the expert teaching skills of mild disabilities special education teachers effectively, it is important to understand how to use mild disabilities special education teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Indiana, special education students are receiving more academic assistance in the general education setting. In their report for the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy that looked at special education governance structures, Plucker et al. (2008) reported "the use of separate classrooms to educate students with disabilities appears to be decreasing in all three governance structure types, with all three models using separate classrooms less than 20% of the time" (p. 47). The role for mild disabilities special education teachers has changed because more special education students are being included within the general education mainstream. More may be expected of mild disabilities special education teachers because of No Child Left Behind and the requirements for schools to make annual yearly progress for all students. Over the years federal mandates and continued criticism have increased, causing schools and teachers to be increasingly pressured to provide quality education for all students (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010).

Special education and general education teachers face new responsibilities as more special education students receive more instruction through the general education setting. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) expects that special education eligible students have an individualized educational plan allowing access to the general education curriculum and addressing their specific academic and behavioral needs (Brownell et al., 2010). Special education and general education teachers need to collaborate in different ways in order to track the progress of special education students. Because the mild disabilities special education teacher or paraprofessional may spend time in the general education setting, the general education teachers may have expectations that the special education teacher or paraprofessional

assist struggling students who do not receive special education services. The general education teacher may ask to have the struggling reader attend the special education students' reading group.

Schools are required to attempt to help all students who are having difficulty grasping grade level curriculum because of expectations in the No Child Left Behind Act. Students are required to demonstrate yearly incremental progress towards proficiency with their state's academic standards by the No Child Left Behind Act (Smith, 2005). Schools must use all available resources in order to assist struggling students. Some of those resources may be mild disabilities special education teachers and those teachers may be used to assist any student who is having difficulty with academics. Schools also may use mild disabilities special education teachers during the Response to Intervention (RtI) process. Mild disabilities special education teachers may be required to add academically weak students to their pull-out intervention groups for special education students. These teachers may be asked to track the progress of those general education students.

As mild disabilities special education teachers are stretched and required to assist more students, their concerns about their jobs may increase. Their stress level may increase because they feel that the special education students are not getting the proper educational attention. In a study investigating the support of new special education teachers (SET), Billingsley, Israel, and Smith (2011) found "new SETs reported concerns about (a) content knowledge and standards, (b) effective instruction, (c) assessment, (d) behavior management, (e) collaboration with others, and (f) managing the job and dealing with stress" (p. 24). Billingsley et al. (2011) concluded that the special education teacher may not have had adequate training for the roles they are expected

to fill. General and mild disabilities special education teachers may require professional development opportunities so they can learn how to effectively collaborate.

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RtI) was developed to assist schools with helping students who are not academically successful and identifying students who may be eligible for special education services. Some researchers have advocated that RtI be seen as an opportunity to move from the twofold system of general education and special education to a single system that addresses the learning needs of all students (Haar, Robicheau, & Palladino, 2008). The primary function of RtI is encouraging schools to identify and work with students before they are failing and more likely to be eligible for special education services. When operating within the RtI framework, school personnel collaborate and create specific and methodical interventions for students as soon as they demonstrate an educational need (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2010; Haar et al., 2008). Response to Intervention is a proactive initiative that occurs in the general education setting before students are formally evaluated for special education services (Hazelkorn, Bucholz, Goodman, Duffy, & Brady, 2011; Thomas & Dykes, 2011). It is a tiered systematic method for sorting out and assessing instructional methods and student progress. Students who are experiencing academic failure or behavioral problems may need different instructional methods and not special education services. They may lack a sub-skill in an area (math or reading) which does not allow them to move forward academically. General education teachers are expected to teach using research-based methods for all students and keep track of those experiencing difficulty because they may need additional instructional interventions.

Response to Intervention uses a tiered instructional model which begins with all of the students in the general education classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007). Schools and general

education teachers are challenged to use research-based instructional methods for all students. Tier 1 instruction is designed to encompass approximately 80% of the students and it is the base on which the other interventions are created (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). During Tier 1, the general education teacher uses research-based methods to teach all students. Grade level teachers keep track of students who may need differentiated instruction or specific interventions. Teachers or grade level teams may create formative assessments to assist with determining who understands targeted concepts and who requires more assistance. Students who do not make satisfactory progress may require a second tier of instruction or teachers may search for other instructional methods.

The general education teacher refers the students not making satisfactory progress to the school student assistance team and they develop research-based interventions. Student assistance teams employ problem solving methods because these students may have more than one educational or behavioral need and their assistance needs to be more individualized (Buffum et al., 2010). This next step is Tier 2 and it delivers methodical, interventions in addition to the grade level instruction students receive at Tier 1 (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Indiana Department of Education, 2010). Tier 2 instruction is not meant to take the place of research-based classroom instruction. The student's progress with the intervention is tracked for a period of five to six weeks. Progress is assessed weekly and it is determined if the student is making adequate progress with that particular intervention. Adjustments to the intervention may occur if after a few sessions, the intervention seems inappropriate. If the student is making progress, the intervention may be continued or it may be stopped.

If the student continues to perform below expectations, more individualization may be required. Tier 3 instruction provides that type of intense instruction and targets more specific

student needs (Indiana Department of Education, 2010) Instruction during the Tier 3 phase is more intensive because it is more individualized to meet the needs of the student. In its guidance document, the Indiana Department of Education (2010) reported "if data indicate a student does not meet grade- level expectations, Tier 3 Instruction continues, which would include an advanced core aligned to grade level standards" (p. 20). During Tier 3 instruction, data continue to be collected and analyzed. School personnel may determine that there is sufficient evidence indicating a possible learning disability, may determine an evaluation is necessary, or may decide to continue Tier 3 interventions.

In Indiana, the Department of Education changed the name from Response to Intervention to Response to Instruction. As noted in its guidance document, the Indiana Department of Education (2010) stated "IDOE has selected the terminology "Response to Instruction" (RtI) to indicate the focus on all learners, on teaching and learning, and on the critical role of the teacher in providing the most appropriate instruction" (p. 6). The expectation is to change general education instruction to assist students not meeting grade level expectations before deciding if a student has a learning problem to be addressed through special education services. Students who do not show progress with an intervention may be in need of more concentrated instructional services and possibly special education interventions (Fuchs et al., 2010). Intervention services for at risk students may involve mild disabilities special education teachers in some way. The special education teacher may be asked to provide an opinion of the student's learning capabilities or directly instruct the students.

Data collection and its analysis is an important part of Indiana's Response to Instruction process. The RtI process presents unique concerns for the developing roles of school personnel such as special education and general education teachers as well as psychologists and

educational evaluators (Matropieri & Scruggs, 2005). Grade level teachers are expected to collect data and analyze it in order to develop plans for future classroom lessons as well as students who may be struggling to understand grade level curriculum. Sometimes the school staff expects the mild disabilities special education teachers to develop and those interventions, collect data, and analyze the students' progress. In their study highlighting the support of collaboration in math, Van Garderen, Scheuermann, Jackson, and Hampton (2009) stated "today many special education teachers are expected to provide instructional intervention as well as administer and interpret progress monitoring and diagnostic assessments not only for students with disabilities, but also for students at risk for failure" (p. 56). The special education teacher may be asked to administer an assessment to a student who has been referred to the RtI process. This teacher may also be asked to include that student in an existing group of students who may be working on similar skills. The principal and staff will need to decide if and when general educators or special educators are responsible for subsequent interventions once data have been analyzed.

Special Education Roles and Responsibilities

Mild disabilities special education teachers are under increasing pressure as they try to carve out their role in the school setting. Kaufman and Ring (2011) pointed out "every school is a unique community with its own legacy of traditions and relationships that new special education teachers must learn to navigate" (p. 52). All teachers must learn to navigate through developing instructional and classroom management skills, understanding the district's curriculum, and adapting to school culture (Jones, Youngs, & Frank, 2013). In each school there are explicit and unspoken roles and responsibilities for all staff. New and veteran mild disabilities special education teachers may struggle with role ambiguity as they work within the

school to provide special education services through collaborative efforts with general education teachers (Billingsley, 2004; DeMik, 2008; Jones et al., 2013). The special education teacher may not know what principals or general education teachers expect when working with special education students or struggling general education students. Sometimes mild disabilities special education teachers find themselves supporting students in the classroom, teaching the same lesson in a different classroom, taking turns with the general education teacher and instructing a different section of a lesson, or team teaching with the general education teacher (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). This may cause stress and frustration for the special education teacher. Teachers who experience role conflict are likely to demonstrate exhaustion because the demands on them vary, are incompatible with their job, or are not appropriate (Plash & Piotrowski, 2012). Often in schools, there are a fewer number of mild disabilities special education teachers in relation to general education teachers and the special education teacher is responsible for students at multiple grade levels. Sometimes, mild disabilities special education teachers may find it difficult to meet the needs of special education students as well as general education students who are at risk for academic failure because the teacher's time is stretched.

Mild disabilities special education teachers may decide or be expected to assist other academically at risk students while in the general education classroom. Wyatt-Ross (2007) found special education teachers spent their time in general education classrooms helping students on their caseload and others who were having difficulty with academics as part of the school's Response to Intervention (RtI) plan. Schools are challenged to educate all students whether or not they have been identified as needing special education services and they use all possible resources to accomplish the task.

Research has also shown that in some RtI models the role of the special educator was not clearly defined (Gessler Werts, Lambert, & Carpenter, 2009; Wyatt-Ross, 2007). Mild disabilities special education teachers may be expected to provide expertise through consultation or directly provide interventions for struggling general education students. This may add to difficulties with determining how to assist those at risk students and who may or may not qualify for special education services because RtI is a general education initiative. Some education scholars felt special education's appropriate purpose was to merge with the structure of the new tiered general education structure (Fuchs et al., 2007). Some mild disabilities special education teachers may volunteer to assist students, others may be asked by school intervention teams, and other mild disabilities special education teachers may be expected to assist students who are not grasping grade level instruction. Depending upon the culture of the school, there may be differences in how mild disabilities special education teachers view their role and what is expected by other staff or the building principal.

Wyatt-Ross (2007) pointed out a frequent subject when discussing the RtI process is collaboration among general education and special education teachers. Being used for RtI interventions adds one more aspect to the role of special education within the school. Helping failing students is the job of the entire school. Berry (2012) noted that a special education teacher's sense of job satisfaction and efficacy improved when responsibility for students was shared. In Indiana it is expected that teachers will frequently meet and cooperatively work to assist all students (Indiana Department of Education, 2010). This implies that mild disabilities special education teachers should be included when making intervention decisions for academically weak students. It implies that time must be set aside so that general education and mild disabilities special education teachers can schedule collaboration time.

Hunt, Soto, Maeir, and Doering (2003) found that when special education and general education teachers collaborated using a structured collaboration plan, students improved behaviorally and academically. They reported that "the educational teams for each student included the general education teacher, the inclusion support teacher, the child's parents, and the instructional assistant assigned to each classroom" (Hunt et al., 2003, p. 318). Even though it has been shown that collaboration and co-teaching arrangements improve student outcomes, the status of the special education teacher may be lowered in inclusive classroom settings (Shoho & Katims, 1998; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). In the view of some general education teachers, the special education teacher becomes an instructional assistant to help the general education teacher and follow instructional directions with little input. Role confusion and misunderstood expectations may play a role in this finding. Within the general education setting the mild disabilities special education teacher may play one or several roles. The special education teacher may simply support students during the lesson, teach the same lesson in a different classroom, instruct students in a different part of the classroom, actually teach a section of the lesson, or take turns teaching with the general education teacher (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002).

The special education teacher needs to be aware of teaching strategies, behavior strategies, curriculum, and state standards for students from various grades within an elementary school. Lemons (2013) found special education students not only have learning disabilities, but many also have behavioral issues, ADHD, or cognitive delays which require a greater time investment from special education teachers. Mild disabilities special education teachers may be held responsible for special education students when they make poor behavioral choices. They may be called out of instructional activities to immediately address the behavioral problem instead of the general education teacher handling it, following the behavior plan, or calling the

principal for assistance. Hastings and Oakford (2003) found general education teachers revealed more negative attitudes toward students with behavioral and emotional difficulties than towards students with intellectual disabilities. Because of this, the mild disabilities special education teacher may not feel supported by staff concerning special education students with behavioral issues. Valeo (2008) discovered general education teachers have two points of view regarding responsibility for special education students: responsibility is shared or it belongs solely to the special education teacher. Prather-Jones (2011) found special education teachers who worked with students who have emotional and behavioral disorders felt supported when administrators enforced reasonable behavior consequences and included them in the decision making process concerning the consequences. When mild disabilities special education teachers have total responsibility for special education students, there is increased job stress.

In their study of special education issues, Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, and Farmer (2011) found some teachers "identified aspects of providing services in the general education curriculum as beyond the scope of their certifications (i.e., content areas and working with at risk students)" (p. 8). The special education teacher may not be fully prepared for the assigned population. The special education teacher may also be responsible for multiple intervention methods such as inclusion, a resource room setting, and consultation. In her study investigating why special educators leave the field, Kaff (2004) asserted special education teachers found it difficult to juggle those multiple intervention methods (inclusion, resource room, and consultation) under one delivery system. Working under those constraints stretched the training of the mild disabilities special education teachers. This causes stress for the mild disabilities special education teachers because they may be perceived as not adding value to the mission of the school if they resist being used in such ways.

Professional Development

Mild disabilities special education teachers may be expected to oversee special education paraprofessionals, help any students at risk for academic failure, or collaborate with general education teachers and may not have training for these roles. These teachers need a different induction process because they tackle different obstacles than their general education colleagues (Thornton, Petlier, & Medina, 2007). Professional development is important for mild disabilities special education teachers so that they will be able to prepare for assisting students in the general education setting (Idol, 2006; Ketron, 2007; Mastropieri, 2001; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette, & Benson, 2010). Professional development opportunities should address the skills needed for teachers to effectively collaborate and help students in the general education setting. In their study investigating special education issues, Berry et al. (2011) reported special education teachers "requested further professional development to improve (a) their understanding of curriculum content, (b) their ability to include students in the general education classroom, and (c) their ability to collaborate with general education teachers"(p. 10). Mild disabilities special education teachers have more roles than simply educating students outside of the general education classroom. Training may be necessary to keep special education staff aware of techniques and strategies to assist with new roles. As schools move more towards inclusive settings, district level staff development provides additional information for all teachers so that they will become familiar with role and responsibility expectations (Berry, 2012; Mastropieri, 2001). One of these roles may be that of the consultant or interventionist within the general education setting. Another role may be one associated within the team of teachers who meet to discuss academic concerns of students at risk for academic failure.

Special education and general education teachers may not know how to effectively collaborate. Wyatt-Ross (2007) found "there was an admitted need for the district to provide professional development training centered on co-teaching and collaboration" (p. 57). Collaboration is more than meeting to discuss students' progress or academic concerns. Professional development opportunities need to be scheduled as well as opportunities for follow up. Without this training, mild disabilities special education teachers may flounder and become frustrated because they feel no students are effectively being helped while in the inclusion classroom. Special education and general education teachers may need assistance with learning how to collaborate professionally and effectively. Principals might not understand how special education and general education teachers could work together because they lack an understanding of the special education teachers' work (Billingsley, 2007). This might contribute to poor professional development choices for school staff. The professional development may address the need to collaborate, but not how to effectively collaborate or how special education and general education staff should collaborate with each other.

There may not be time allotted for teachers to experiment with the collaborative methods presented during professional development time. Ogletree (2008) asserted "the building principal can influence many components of inclusion classrooms by assessing the needs of the teachers involved and providing the resources necessary to establish successful inclusion classrooms" (p. 35). The building principal is responsible for shaping the culture of the school through explicit expectations. If inclusion is an expectation, the principal needs to lead its implementation. A necessary resource for implementation would be professional development designed to foster effective collaboration and the time necessary for that collaboration.

General education and mild disabilities special education teachers may not have received training at the preservice college level to enable them to work with a variety of students. Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999) studied the attitudes of principals and special education teachers towards inclusion and found there was agreement between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals indicating "teachers do not have the instructional skills to meet the academic needs of students with mild disabilities in general classrooms" (p. 204). Teachers may need to have their instructional skills updated so that they will have the necessary skills when addressing the needs of special education students. Mastropieri (2001) found that some new special education teachers participated in appropriate preservice experiences with special needs students and others did not. It is stressful for special education and general education teachers when they must work with students for which they have not been formally trained. For special education and general education teachers, professional development is important for the development of weak or missing skills because of limited preservice training.

Special education and general education teachers need to collect data and assess students. Lingo, Barton-Arwood, and Jolivette (2011) reported "with the increased emphasis of using data to make instructional decisions in the classroom, educators need to have the knowledge to select and use data collection methods appropriately in their classrooms" (p. 12). How schools implement data collection is important and training may be needed for staff. In a study about what special education directors thought about Response to Intervention, Gessler Werts et al. (2009) found training for RtI focused more on its definition rather than on its implementation practices. If training does not fully address the need, then it will cause stress for the staff who must implement new practices.

Both special education and general education teachers can no longer use only anecdotal notes as an assessment of students when making instructional decisions. More is expected to show that students are making progress and that the appropriate instructional strategies are used. Professional development needs to be developed to assist mild disabilities special education teachers with understanding how the interventions fit with the grade level curriculum (Leko & Brownell, 2009). As special education students spend more time accessing grade level curriculum, parents and district leaders may want to see more data collection concerning their progress. It may be expected that general education teachers collect data from special education students in their classrooms. Special education teachers require professional development created to match the needs of the students they teach (Kauffman & Ring, 2011). They may require additional training about assessment, methods of collecting data, and using data to make instructional decisions.

Mild disabilities special education teachers often have paraprofessionals assigned to assist them with the education of students. Mastropieri (2001) reported that her lack of training did not enable her to be able to effectively direct the paraprofessional assigned to help her special education students. She asserted "working with paraprofessionals successfully requires good collaborative, supervisory, and management skills" (p. 71). Mild disabilities special education teachers and paraprofessionals may require professional development opportunities so that they will learn how to collaboratively work together. Mild disabilities special education teachers need to learn how to manage and schedule paraprofessionals. Idol (2006) recommended that school personnel become knowledgeable in the effective use of instructional assistants.

Paraprofessionals may also require some training so that they will understand their roles within the school. In an article outlining one urban school district's professional development

plan, McKenzie (2011) stated that "paraprofessionals in special education settings serve an important role in the education of students with disabilities, but they very often do not receive the same level of professional development given to other service providers" (p. 38). Paraprofessionals need to learn about the unique needs of the special education students they are assisting. Mild disabilities special education teachers may not know if they are expected to train paraprofessionals or if that should happen at the school or district level. Paraprofessionals may not understand what their role is, and this may cause difficulties between the paraprofessional and the general education or mild disabilities special education teachers. Sometimes special education or general education teachers see the paraprofessional role as one of helping students and some see it as helping the teacher with non-instructional tasks.

Time and Scheduling

Time is an important commodity in any school setting and special education teachers vary in how they use time during the week (Vannest & Parker, 2009). Collaboration, planning lessons, meetings, behavior plans, observations, data collection and analysis, and interventions for students take time. Mild disabilities special education teachers also require time to develop Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) for special education students on their caseloads. In a study about special education teacher attrition, DeMik (2008) found that "in the category of working conditions, strong points of frustration included excessive paperwork, finding time for planning, and difficulty meeting the individual needs of students" (p. 28). Mild disabilities special education teachers may not feel they have the time to properly assist special education students as well as other students who are not successful within the classroom. Time may not be scheduled or available for them to be able to complete the necessary daily activities of paperwork, collaboration, instructional planning, or added interventions for at risk general

education students. Mild disabilities special education teachers feel that their time with special education students becomes compromised when they must attend to nonteaching tasks like paperwork (Billingsley, 2004). These teachers are pulled between working directly with students and paperwork requirements.

This can be frustrating for special education and general education teachers as well as building administrators. General education teachers may have expectations about what assistance is needed for special education and other students exhibiting poor academic performance. Building administrators can help reduce job stress through scheduled collaborative meetings in which mild disabilities special education teachers discuss concerns about meeting the needs of students on their caseload. Mild disabilities special education teachers may be tempted to refuse to help with other academically poor students or may remove themselves from student assistance teams or other school committees. When they decrease their amount of involvement within the school, their expertise is not easily accessible and this may negatively affect the school's efforts to move students forward.

The Indiana Department of Education (2010) expects school RtI teams to meet on a regular basis to discuss and review student educational data, strategies for interventions, and the school wide plan. The special education teacher may be expected to be a part of an RtI school team because of expertise that the special educator possesses. In their collaboration study, Hunt et al. (2003) noted that "the expertise of the special education staff was used to effectively support the students at risk thereby unifying general and special education resources to meet the needs of all students in the classroom" (p. 328). Being a part of a team to address the needs of academically weak general education students indicates that mild disabilities special education teachers must find additional time to assist with structured RtI interventions. Students who have

been identified as at risk for academic failure will need to receive that intervention on a regular basis. The special education teacher may have to reconfigure intervention groups to include those students who are in the RtI process. At some point, a small group of special education students may turn into a large group of special and general education students and the intervention may not be as effective. In order to meet regularly, time needs to be scheduled and the special education teacher may be pressed for this time.

Scheduling time to complete paperwork can be difficult for mild disabilities special education teachers. Shea (2010) pointed out "there is a long tradition in teaching that unofficially requires teachers to work off the clock in order to complete all of their assigned duties" (p. 111). Working on student Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), lesson plans, and progress reports may take an enormous amount of time after school hours. If mild disabilities special education teachers do not complete these assigned tasks, they might receive poor evaluations. The school district may be scrutinized and sited for improvement through sanctions by the Indiana Department of Education because special education paperwork timelines have been missed. Mild disabilities special education teachers experience difficulty keeping student documentation up to date, developing student Individualized Educational Plans, serving on school committees, and being available for crisis intervention during the course of normal duty hours (Shea, 2010). Mild disabilities special education teachers need to be available for everyday tasks as well as be available for crisis situations. When special education students have behavioral problems, the special education teacher is responsible for designing behavior plans. It is important for schools to have special educators on committees so that the concerns of special education may be heard when planning for the school. Sometimes, the special education teacher

is aware of research based intervention strategies which could be helpful to other students and would be able to share them during those school planning meetings.

Data collection is another time consuming responsibility of all teachers. General education and mild disabilities special education teachers are expected to monitor the progress of students with and without special education needs (Lingo et al., 2011). Data need to be collected and analyzed on a regular basis which may be daily or weekly. The special education teacher may need to gather data from a general education teacher or special education paraprofessional. The special education teacher needs to analyze the data and adjust interventions or support for students. The adjustment may need to be made by the general education teacher or paraprofessional and this indicates time set aside for collaboration. Because mild disabilities special education teachers are responsible for data collection, they need to find extra time in their schedule to regularly assess the targeted skills of special education students or struggling general education students they are expected to monitor.

Collaboration is necessary if special education and general education teachers are going to help special education or general education students. It is also necessary if the special education teacher has a special education paraprofessional assigned to assist special education students. In a study exploring collaborative teaming, Hunt et al. (2003) found that "team members suggested that the collaborative process allowed participants to share their expertise and experience to support student progress" (p. 327). The team members had regularly scheduled time to discuss student data and make adjustments to instruction. Collaboration seems to be helpful to teams of special education and general education teachers. When planned interventions of support are consistently implemented, students experience an increase in academic achievement, classroom engagement, peer interaction, and student-initiated

interactions (Hunt et al., 2003). It has been shown that collaboration helps students who are not academically successful when it is implemented with fidelity. Effective collaboration with stakeholders who work with special education students requires time and scheduling. Some elementary schools may not have the special education teacher available on a full time basis. In an elementary school setting, there are fewer mild disabilities special education teachers than general education teachers and scheduling time may be a difficult barrier to overcome.

Support Issues

Support is important from building administrators, special education directors, and colleagues as mild disabilities special education teachers develop their roles. Unrealistic, inadequate, and unsupportive working conditions affect the ability of special education teachers to do their jobs effectively (Crockett, 2004; Fread Albrecht, Johns, Mountsteven, & Olorunda, 2009). Some mild disabilities special education teachers do not feel they effectively reach students when there are unsupportive working conditions. Special education teachers feel more supported and able to fulfill their roles when supported by administrators, general education teachers, and parents (Berry, 2012; Kaff, 2004; Prather-Jones, 2011). Sometimes teachers do not feel supported by administrators, parents, or other staff which creates poor working conditions and stress. The principal must understand the dynamics of the building and create a building environment which supports special education students and teachers. The culture of the school and the environment created by the principal and staff affect how much the special education teacher feels supported (Cancio, Fread Albrecht, & Johns, 2013; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). If the culture and environment of the school support special education, the special education teacher will feel comfortable.

Often in schools, there are a greater number of general education teachers to the number of mild disabilities special education teachers. The special education teacher may feel isolated because other general education teachers may not really understand the breadth of the special education teacher's roles and responsibilities. Teachers would feel more supported if they had some type of regular contact with other mild disabilities special education teachers in the district. Special education teachers have unique needs and school districts should consider varying and tailoring training and induction programs for special education teachers (Billingsley, 2011; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Gersten et al. (2001) also discussed the recommendation for school districts to assign funds so that special education teachers could periodically meet with others within or out of the school district to exchange ideas.

New mild disabilities special education teachers also require support so that they feel welcome as part of the staff. Mastropieri (2001) indicated "additional on the job supports need to be in place to provide any required assistance in learning the roles and responsibilities associated with the new position" (p. 72). Each school system and school building has its own culture which a new teacher needs to understand. The new special education teacher may need contact with another person who understands the expectations of the school system. Researchers studied the perceptions of first-year mild disabilities special education teachers and found that they reported it would be helpful to have contact with a mentor who understood the special education teaching position (Mastropieri, 2001; Swanson Gehrke, & McCoy, 2007). This mentor would be able to assist with the induction of the new special education teacher into the culture of the elementary school.

It is important for the special education teacher to have working relationships with other general education teachers and sometimes these relationships are strained. Relationships become

strained when mild disabilities special education teachers feel as though they are treated as classroom assistants instead of equal colleagues. Sometimes, general education teachers do not demonstrate respect for the schedule or input of the special education teacher. Special education teachers experienced increased job satisfaction and tended to continue with their employment when they felt supported by building administrators and faculty (Berry, 2012; Boe et al., 2008; Gersten et al., 2001). If mild disabilities special education teachers do not feel supported by classroom teachers, then they may not put extra effort into helping special education or other students not making satisfactory academic progress within the general education setting. Mild disabilities special education teachers may put just enough time in to get their instructional responsibilities completed.

Sometimes mild disabilities special education teachers are required to work with students for whom they have minimal or no training. In a study investigating special education teacher tenacity researchers discovered placement in teaching assignments for which special education teachers have little or no training produces stress and frustration (Shea, 2010). Teachers do not always feel supported when placed in positions without their consent. Sometimes staff must be allocated to other positions for various reasons, and may not be consulted about the new assignment. Building and special education directors need to be sensitive to having a conversation about the new assignment and reasons behind it. The special education teacher may require some additional training to help with the skill set needed for the job change.

Principal Responsibilities

Gessler-Werts et al. (2009) asserted that school administrators are responsible for "assigning roles, implementing policies, making decisions for programs, schools, and individual students" (p. 252). As an instructional leader, the principal is one of the most influential factors

affecting the academic performance of all students (Lynch, 2012). The principal is increasingly required to know and be a part of what is being done to help special education and general education students who are not successful with grade level curriculum. Principals need to be cognizant of the responsibilities and distinct needs of the special educations teachers working in their buildings (Thornton et al., 2007). Mild disabilities special education teachers have different roles and responsibilities than general education teachers and principals need to understand the differences. Principals impact the mild disabilities special education teachers' experience within the building and should work to support the special education teachers in different ways (Cancio et al., 2013; Thornton et al., 2007). The principal is the educational leader in the building and needs to make sure that mild disabilities special education teachers have the necessary time, classroom setting, and materials for successful interaction with students needing additional instructional interventions.

How a school assists struggling students depends upon the school personnel and its leadership. Each school and school system operationalizes the Response to Intervention (RtI) model in different ways; making each version slightly different (Hoover & Love, 2011). The Response to Intervention guidance document generated by the Indiana Department of Education does not describe how personnel should be used to achieve the goal of assisting students who are failing to grasp curriculum. The school is under pressure to intervene with students who are not successful and show improvement. In Indiana, all school personnel may be utilized in order to assist at risk students and potentially raise ISTEP+ scores. Roles for special and general educators will need to be defined by administration either within the school or school system.

The department of education also expects building administrators to take the lead within their buildings. The Indiana Department of Education (2010) asserts strong leadership at the state, district, and school level is essential for better-quality teaching and improved learning. Principals are in charge of their schools and may encourage or require special education teachers to assist with failing students as well as students already on their caseloads. Hunt et al. (2003) found that when a plan is implemented with fidelity, special education and academically weak students can improve behaviorally and academically through the reallocation of resources. Resources may be in the form of materials or staff (teachers or paraprofessionals) and fall under the responsibility of the building administrator.

Principals are responsible for ensuring that special education and general education teachers have time to complete instructional and non-instructional tasks. In her study about urban principals' roles in supporting inclusion, Ogletree (2008) found principals were cognizant that collaboration and communication among teachers requires more time than individual planning time. It was reported that these principals made sure the schedules for collaborating teachers included common planning time (Ogletree, 2008). These principals realized it was their responsibility to ensure the teachers had the time for effective collaboration and they found ways to schedule time and facilitate collaboration.

Professional development opportunities for staff are the responsibility of principals who want their staff to develop skills to better educate students. The principal needs to think about and plan for ways in which the staff can grow and develop new skill sets. Principals need to assess the needs of their building and plan training according to needs. In an article discussing collaboration, Ripley (1997) stated "both district- and building-level planning should provide staff development opportunities to encourage teachers and administrators to participate in

classes, workshops, seminars, and/or professional conferences" (p. 3). Professional development opportunities can be within the school or outside of the school setting. The principal needs to consider how to disseminate information acquired by one or two teachers when professional development occurs outside of the school. The importance of professional development was discussed in a study completed by Berry et al. (2011) and they found school districts supported their faculty by offering professional development through various trainings during the school year. Principals need to advocate for professional development which meets the needs of special education and general education teachers. They need to know the needs of their staff and perhaps advocate for specific professional development needs.

Principals are responsible for the climate and monitoring the culture of their buildings. They need to be aware of the working relationship between all staff and encourage positive working environments. Principals need to be seen as someone who listens to the concerns and ideas of all staff. In a study investigating the principal's role in inclusion, Ogletree (2008) reported flexible principals find the time to listen to teacher and student needs and find ways to be supportive. Principals may need to be flexible in their thinking and planning when making decisions for the school. In a study about the alienation of special education teachers, Shoho and Katims (1998) reported "special education teachers who are disenfranchised from the decision-making and educational placement process may lack feelings of self-advocacy and hence, feel powerless against the school structure" (p. 13). Principals have the responsibility of understanding that mild disabilities special education teachers need to feel that they fit within the school culture.

Principals also require their own type of professional development because they have a responsibility to continue to learn to be able to move students and staff forward. Like special

education and general education teachers they may not have been trained through their preparation programs to think about data collection, collaboration, supporting interventions for failing students, or inclusion models. Principal preparation programs must provide opportunities for principals to focus being an instructional leader and developing a culture of student academic success (Lynch, 2012; Ogletree, 2008). Principals need to embrace the role of leading the school towards the goal of improved student achievement. The role of the principal is no longer just a managerial position, but one of educational leader.

Summary

Over the years there has been a push for inclusion of special education students in general education settings and more reliance upon mild disabilities special education teachers to assist with any academically poor students. Hunt et al. (2003) asserted that "responding to the educational needs of students at risk and those with disabilities requires schools to unify and reallocate resources" (p. 330). The principal is the person ultimately responsible for allocating use of the resources within the building. Instructional leadership requires principals to support the faculty through altering the curriculum and instruction when necessary (Idol, 2006). The principal needs to consider how all staff are utilized within the building to benefit the students' academic outcomes.

Some of the resources to be reallocated are mild disabilities special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The mild disabilities special education teacher may not have the necessary skills when expected to assist special education and other unsuccessful students. Professional development is an important aspect of assisting mild disabilities special education teachers with their roles. Idol (2006) suggested an increase of inclusion related professional development for teachers was necessary. This training would benefit students as well as general

education and mild disabilities special education teachers. The study also reported some of the educators interviewed suggested that additional training was necessary for teaching assistants (Idol, 2006).

Many factors influence the effective utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers. Teachers require adequate time for professional development, planning, collaboration, and paperwork requirements. Stempien and Loeb (2002) suggested administrators can reduce the stress on special education teachers through increased time for unique job tasks, a low staff-child ratio, and better managing the number of direct contact hours with students. Schools are challenged to find effective ways to assist special education and at risk general education students. The principal has an important role when trying to move the school forward so that all students have learning opportunities.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory study was to compare the perceptions of Indiana elementary principals, special education directors, and mild disabilities special education teachers on the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers and the barriers encountered using mild disabilities special education teachers in an elementary school. Mild disabilities special education teachers are an important asset and their time and expertise are valuable resources for a school. Sometimes their roles and responsibilities interfere with their ability to provide services for special education students as well as those general education students who may be exhibiting academic failure. The three groups identified in this research investigation were Indiana elementary principals, special education directors, and elementary mild disabilities special education teachers.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the study were as follows:

1. What role expectations exist for mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?
2. What barriers exist concerning the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?

Research Design

A quantitative descriptive research design was chosen for this study because it was used to portray a group of people through direct examination and analysis of a sample of that population group (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). I wanted to describe characteristics of a population of Indiana elementary mild disabilities special education teachers, special education directors, and

principals. In order to compare perceptions of teachers, special education directors, and principals across the state and develop a theory about the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers, many points of data were needed. I determined that survey research would enable me to collect many points of data.

I developed a survey in order to collect the necessary data. A survey's purpose is to yield statistics in the form of quantitative or numerical descriptions about some characteristics of the population being studied (Fowler, 2009). I wanted to investigate the perceptions of Indiana elementary principals, special education directors, and mild disabilities special education teachers in order to indicate similarities or differences in perceptions of the use of mild disabilities special education teachers. DeVellis (2012) asserted "measurement instruments that are collections of items combined into a composite score and intended to reveal levels of theoretical variables not really observable by direct means are referred to as scales" (p. 11). Through the survey process, I wanted to measure perceptions of how school systems use mild disabilities special education teachers. Many researchers who investigated the perceptions of mild disabilities special education teachers and principals used a quantitative descriptive research design and used surveys for collecting data.

Survey development was accomplished through a review of the information discovered during the literature review. I developed a questionnaire for collecting data related to the two research questions. I divided the survey into five parts which included: demographic information, special education teacher roles, professional development, support issues, and time/scheduling. Through the literature review I found that these factors affect mild disabilities special education teachers, principals, special education directors, students, and elementary schools. Each set of response items were presented in the survey by the previously mentioned

category; survey items were not put in random order. I also added two open-ended response questions at the suggestion of my dissertation committee. After speaking with my doctoral committee, I determined that Qualtrics would be used to upload the survey, send it out, and collect data. During the review process through Ball State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) making the respondent information anonymous was recommended. Within the Qualtrics program, I chose "Anonymize Response" when creating the survey to assist with keeping respondent names, schools, and school districts confidential. This aspect of Qualtrics gives only the IP address of those who responded and does not reveal respondent names. When reminders were sent, Qualtrics anonymously distributed reminder letters to those who had not completed a survey.

I determined that a Likert scale as well as two open ended questions would be used to elicit the necessary data. Many researchers use Likert scaling when creating survey instruments quantifying attitudes, beliefs, and opinions (DeVillis, 2012). I developed statements for each survey about each of the four categories of: administrative support, special education teacher roles/responsibilities, time/scheduling obstacles, and professional development. I created seven or eight statements for each survey section. DeVellis (2012) stated "when a Likert scale is used, the item is presented as a declarative sentence, followed by response options that indicate varying degrees of agreement with or endorsement of the statement" (p. 93). I selected Likert scale categories of: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The category response of "do not know" was added to the special education directors' survey upon the request of my doctoral committee. This was added because special education directors may not be sure of what occurs with the inner workings of elementary schools within their district.

I began the process of searching for my pool of schools by developing a list of all school districts' names and state identification numbers by county within Indiana. The Indiana Department of Education website through the IDOE Compass page and a list of special education planning districts were used as a starting point. Each specific elementary school's or district's website was viewed to obtain the principals' and mild disabilities special education teachers' names and e-mail or mailing address. In some cases, it was not clear which teachers were mild disabilities special education teachers when viewing staff directories located on school or district websites. It was also clear that for many schools more than one mild disabilities special education teacher was likely to be at the school. Special education directors' names were taken from a list of Special Education Planning District contacts.

The names and email addresses were uploaded into Qualtrics under three separate panels so that response results could be compared. An informational letter (See Appendix D) was developed which included the purpose and scope of the study. The participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential as I was interested in trends of perceptions. The participants were also told that access to the data collected would be available for them to view after the research project was completed.

Principal, special education administrator and special education teacher participants were contacted via email which contained the informational letter (See Appendix D) and the anonymous link to the survey. Other mild disabilities special education teachers, who were not identified through their school district's website, were contacted through the principal of the school by email. I sent an email to the principals and they were asked to give the mild disabilities special education teachers the link to the website. All of the participants were given the school's survey access code and also directed to a website for more information concerning

the research project. The email sent to participants included a link to a website so that they could view the introductory letter (See Appendix D) and access the survey.

Description of the Sample

I developed a list of Indiana's 92 counties in alphabetical order, considered schools within each county, and developed a list of all elementary schools by name, school number, and special education governance type. This became the sample frame from which I drew elementary schools for my research sample. I determined that the sample should include elementary schools, which included kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade. Because IREAD and ISTEP+ testing begin at third grade, it seemed there may be a greater number of students impacted by the special education teacher in these types of schools. It seemed likely that Response to Intervention (RtI) practices or a continuum of intervention services would be used at these elementary schools and mild disabilities special education teachers would be utilized in different ways.

I determined that a stratified sample process would be used to develop the sample population. Fowler (2009) reported that sample bias occurs "if there are some people in the target population who do not have any chance at all to be selected for the sample, and if they are somehow consistently different from those who have a chance to be selected" (p. 13). I thought the special education governance type needed to be considered and proportionally represented when choosing the sample population. Special education governance type may have some influence on how mild disabilities special education teachers are assigned and used within school systems. There might be bias if care was not taken to have the governance types equitably represented.

The Indiana Department of Education website through the IDOE Compass page was used to locate elementary schools by county using the name and number of the school. I located 766

elementary schools matching the criteria of having kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade. At this time I did not consider including charter school personnel as possible sample participants. The pool of schools was divided into the following special education governance categories: Single, Interlocal, Joint Services, and Cooperative. There were: 380 Joint Services, 232 Single, 130 Interlocal, and 24 Cooperative special education governance types. The following percentages represented the proportional number of schools by special education governance type: 50% Joint Services, 30% Single, 17% Interlocal, and 3% Cooperative. The percentages were multiplied by the total number of schools (766) and resulted in the following number of schools for the specified planning districts: 190 Joint Services, 70 Single, 22 Interlocal, and one Cooperative. I decided to increase the number of elementary schools in the cooperative governance category to four to increase the likelihood of responses from these schools because survey response rate is usually less than 100%.

A random number table was generated through the website graphpad.com. Each school on the list of schools was given a randomly generated number and then chosen for the sample. A total sample school population of 286 schools was generated. This sample pool of schools was used to determine which special education administrator would be in the sample. I found 65 separate special education planning district entities.

Although requested in the demographic information section, principals, special education directors, or mild disabilities special education teachers were not eliminated from the sample pool based upon number of years of experience. The number of students on a special education teacher's caseload was not a factor affecting sample selection. The sample pool of mild disabilities special education teachers did not include speech language pathologists who also work with students in a variety of ways within the school setting.

The Instrument

The following experts received copies of the survey instrument so that validity input could be obtained. In an article highlighting the basics of survey research Umbach (2005) suggested that researchers discuss the survey with professionals who are knowledgeable about the subject matter and survey design, and let them provide survey advice.

- **Dr. Marilynn Quick,** Professor, Educational Leadership, Teachers College, Ball State University (Dr. Quick has expertise in doctoral studies)
- **Dr. Joseph McKinney,** Professor, Educational Leadership, Teachers College, Ball State University (Dr. McKinney has expertise in doctoral studies)
- **Dr. Michael Harvey,** Associate Professor, Special Education, Teachers College, Ball State University (Dr. Harvey has expertise in special education topics)
- **Dr. Heather Bruns,** Associate Professor, Biology Department, Ball State University (Dr. Bruns has expertise with biology and scientific research publications)
- **Dr. William Sharp,** Retired Professor, Educational Leadership, Teachers College, Ball State University (Dr. Sharp has expertise in doctoral studies)
- **Mrs. Joanna Lidy MA, CCC-SLP,** Speech Language Pathologist (Mrs. Lidy has expertise with language and its nuances)

Copies of the surveys (See Appendix E and F) were given to these experts and their advice was collected. The experts provided suggestions for improving wording and eliminating or adding items so that the survey reflected the purpose of the research questions. My committee recommended two open-ended questions be added to my survey. Both of the open-ended questions were related to my research questions:

1. What barriers exist concerning the use of special education teachers within the school setting?
2. What is the role of the special education teacher in respect to Response to Intervention (RtI) or helping general education students who demonstrate academic struggles?

The survey was altered to reflect the experts' suggestions and it was resubmitted.

After the experts determined that no other suggestions were warranted, the two sets of surveys and the informational letter were sent to the Ball State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for its approval to proceed with the research investigation. The Ball State University IRB approved the surveys and granted exempt status (See Appendix B) on August 27, 2013. A revision was requested and granted (See Appendix C) on December 3, 2013 when the chair of my doctoral committee changed.

After the research investigation was approved by the Ball State University Institutional Review Board, the reliability of the instrument was checked. Fowler (2009) reported on the importance of testing questions and stated "all questions should be tested to make sure that they "work" for the populations, contexts, and goals of the study" (p. 118). A combination of five elementary school principals and mild disabilities special education teachers from several schools in the area were contacted about participating in the pilot study. Each was contacted through e-mail prior to the first administration of the survey and each agreed to take the survey twice. These individuals were subjects who were not in the research study participant pool. The surveys were presented online through Qualtrics to each participant and it took one week to collect them. The participants did not report any difficulties accessing the Qualtrics site through the online link. Two weeks later the same group of participants filled out the survey again. The

survey instruments were administered twice to observe if the responses were similar between the groups completing each survey.

Dr. Kianre Eouanzoui of Ball State University assisted with the reliability check of the survey instrument. The pilot results were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha, which is a statistical method for assessing the internal consistency of an instrument. It was created "to provide a measure of internal consistency of a test or scale; it is expressed as a number between 0 and 1" (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011, p. 53). The data was uploaded into the IBM SPSS program and the results tabulated. Cronbach's Alpha for the entire instrument was found to be .876. Experts have differing opinions concerning the acceptable values of alpha ranging from 0.70 to 0.95 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Because my pilot survey analysis fell within that range, I decided to distribute the survey.

Data Collection

I chose Qualtrics for the Internet distribution of the survey; it is an Internet based site developed to create, distribute, and collect survey data. It kept track of who completed surveys, so that reminders were sent only to those who had not submitted surveys. I formatted the survey using the prompts provided by the Qualtrics site through Ball State University. After the Internet surveys were completed and analyzed for validity and reliability, they were ready for participants to view.

While there are 286 schools in the pool of schools, many schools have more than one mild disabilities special education teacher. I determined all mild disabilities teachers at each school would be requested to complete the survey. There were 65 special education planning districts among the schools chosen with three of the districts having two special education directors for a total of 68. A common method of requesting subjects to complete an Internet

based survey is through an email invitation (Fowler, 2009). I contacted 286 elementary school principals, 380 mild disabilities special education teachers, and 68 special education directors through email with an informational letter and a link to the survey through Qualtrics. These subjects were principals and mild disabilities special education teachers who were identified and had email addresses posted through the school websites via the IDOE Compass website. The special education directors were identified from a list of special education planning districts. For those schools in which it is was not clear who the mild disabilities special education teachers were, the principals were contacted by email and asked to give an informational letter with my Ball State email address to the mild disabilities special education teacher(s) in the building.

The survey was distributed on December 1, 2013 through the Internet. Survey participants were given seven days to respond before another attempt was made to remind them to participate in the study. I sent an email reminder to respondents who did not respond to the original participation request. The Qualtrics program kept track of those who did not respond, and the reminder went out to those prospective subjects. After another seven days, those who did not respond were sent a follow up letter with the survey link included. Survey reminders were not distributed during winter break because I felt the subjects may not necessarily check their school email. I determined that a potential participant would be given no more than four opportunities to complete the survey.

Data Analysis

I worked with Dr. Kianre Eouanzoui from Ball State University to analyze collected data. Data were collected through Qualtrics and were analyzed and categorized as participants completed surveys. The data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics program. After a

period of forty-five days, the survey was closed and the data from the returned surveys were tabulated and analyzed.

It was determined that analysis of the collected data would occur through an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) reported that analysis of variance is "an inferential statistics technique used to determine if there is a significant difference among the means of three or more data groups" (p. 595). In this study, the three data groups consisted of mild disabilities special education teachers, special education directors, and elementary school principals. Results from each group were kept in separate files within the Qualtrics website.

I determined to use a coding system for my open-ended questions. Coding is a way to categorize and grasp the information found in open-ended responses (Saldana, 2009). First I assigned each response a number and noted associated response categories. For both questions, I also categorized responses by the subject groups of: special education administrator, mild disabilities special education teacher, and principal. I then created a coding chart (See Appendix H and Appendix I) for each question and recorded the numbers according to category and participant group. The general categories for my question about barriers were: Time/Scheduling, Caseload, Staffing/Budget, School Expectations, Curriculum/Goals, and No Barriers. For the barriers question, I also recorded responses as: positive, negative, or neutral depending upon the general tone of the response. For example, the response "Time to do it all!" was coded as a negative because of its negative tone. Responses for my second question concerning roles were recorded as: Interventionist, Consultant, Team Member, Not Team Member, Special Ed. Only, and Like General Education. I did not code responses for the roles question as positive, neutral, or negative.

Overall, 734 surveys were distributed and 190 surveys were returned which represented a 26% return rate. Soon after I distributed my survey, I was contacted by a school district and was asked to eliminate their personnel from my subject pool. I eliminated two special education directors, 10 mild disabilities special education teachers, and five principals. Fifty-five principals, 36 special education directors, and 96 mild disabilities special education teachers completed surveys. Principals started 71 surveys and completed 55 which corresponded to a 19% response rate. Results indicated special education directors started 38 surveys and completed 36 for a 53% response rate. Mild disabilities special education teachers began 109 surveys and completed 96 resulting in a 26% return rate. In regards to my open-ended questions, 28 (78%) special education directors, 88 (92%) mild disabilities special education teachers, and 45 (82%) principals responded to the question about barriers mild disabilities special education teachers face. There were 28 (78%) special education directors, 86 (90%) mild disabilities special education teachers, and 47 (85%) principals who answered the question concerning the role of mild disabilities special education teachers. Results indicated there were 65 bounced emails accounting for 8% of potential survey participants.

There were 190 surveys submitted and 181 surveys able to be analyzed. I used Qualtrics to collect and share data with Dr. Kianre Eouanzoui of Ball State University who assisted with data analysis. Data was uploaded into the IBM SPSS Statistics program and analyzed. Dr. Eouanzoui recommended that an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) be used to assess possible differences in the perceptions among the three subject groups. After the initial analysis through an ANOVA, I determined that other tests such as: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances, Welch and Brown-Forsythe Tests of Equality of Means, Bonferroni post hoc test, and the Dunnett T3 Post Hoc Test would be used to assist with mean analysis. It was also decided to

complete a Two-way ANOVA to determine if there were any interactions between the factors of age, highest educational degree earned, or years in current position upon data set responses.

Committee member Dr. Harvey of Ball State University was consulted regarding data analysis and data was shared through access to Qualtrics. After viewing the data, he recommended a factor analysis for each survey question because my research was exploratory in nature. An ANOVA was conducted for all thirty-one survey items. It was determined that other tests such as: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances, Welch and Brown-Forsythe Tests of Equality of Means, Bonferroni post hoc test, and the Dunnett T3 Post Hoc Test would be used to assist with the factor analysis.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methods used to study the perceptions of elementary principals, special education directors, and mild disabilities special education teachers concerning the use of mild disabilities special education teachers across the state of Indiana. The researcher developed a survey to be taken by elementary principals, special education directors, and mild disabilities special education teachers. The survey was formatted through Qualtrics and accessed through Ball State University. After a panel of experts reviewed the survey instrument it was sent to personnel in 286 elementary schools across Indiana. Data were collected, analyzed, and categorized forty-eight days after the initial participant contact. Results collected for this study are further analyzed in chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to explore the perceptions of elementary school principals, mild disabilities special education teachers, and special education directors concerning the utilization of elementary mild disabilities special education teachers. I wanted to delve into the perceptions of role expectations and delivery of service barriers for mild disabilities special education teachers in elementary schools across Indiana. The four areas of: Teacher Roles, Time/Scheduling Issues, Support Issues, and Professional Development were investigated because these affect elementary school mild disabilities special education teachers, principals, and special education administrators.

The questions guiding my research were:

1. What role expectations exist for mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?
2. What barriers exist concerning the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?

I organized this chapter by participant demographics, quantitative survey data results, and qualitative survey data according to the study subject categories of Roles and Barriers.

Participant Demographics

Demographic data concerning the elementary principals and mild disabilities special education teachers are presented in Table 1. It represents participant demographic information according to the categories of: gender, age, years in the current position, and highest degree obtained. I collected other demographic information specific to each subject group, which was not included in the table such as staff size, caseload size, and student enrollment.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Demographic	Elementary Principals			Special Education Teachers			Special Education Administrators			Total		
	N	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%
Gender												
Male	107	18	33	39	6	6	13	6	17	159	30	16
Female	179	36	65	341	90	94	55	30	83	575	156	84
% of Total	286	54	29	380	96	52	68	36	19	734	186	100
Age												
21-35		7	13		33	35		1	3		41	22
36-50		32	58		30	32		9	25		71	38
51+		16	29		32	34		26	72		74	40
% of Total		55	29		95	51		36	19		186	100
Years in Current Position												
1-5		27	49		25	26		9	25		61	33
6-15		22	40		42	44		13	36		77	41
16+		6	11		29	30		14	39		49	26
% of Total		55	29		96	51		36	19		187	100
Educational Level												
Bachelor		0	0		32	34		0	0		32	17
Master		43	78		62	65		20	56		125	67
Doctorate/Ed. Specialist		12	22		1	1		16	44		29	16
% of Total		55	30		95	51		36	19		186	100

Note: Not all survey respondents completed demographic information.

The survey was sent to 286 principals and 55 completed it. Not all of the principals responded to all of the survey items. The principal survey population was composed of 107 (37%) male and 179 (63%) female principals, which reflected response results observed in Table 1. Most of the principal respondents were in the 36-40 year old age range, had obtained a master degree, and were in their current positions less than 16 years.

Student enrollment and staff size information were also collected from principals: nine worked in buildings with 100-299 students; 13 worked in buildings with 300-499 students; and 23 worked in buildings with 500-799 students. Staff sized ranged from 10-62 teachers with an average teachers staff size of 28 teachers.

The survey was disseminated to 380 mild disabilities special education teachers and 96 completed it. The mild disabilities special education teacher participant pool consisted of 39 (10%) males and 341 (90%) females, which was slightly different than the information in

Table 1 because not all of the mild disabilities special education teachers completed all of the survey items presented. The numbers of teachers across the age ranges were almost equal and most obtained a master degree.

Student enrollment and caseload size information were also collected from mild disabilities special education teachers: 10 worked in buildings with 100-299 students; 41 worked in buildings with 300-499 students; and 45 worked in buildings with 500-799 students. Caseload size ranged from 10-40 students with an average caseload size of 20 students.

Sixty-eight special education directors received the survey and 36 completed it. Not all special education directors responded to all survey items. The special education director participant pool was composed of 13 (19%) male and 55 (81%) female subjects, which reflected the data in Table 1. Most of the special education directors were in the 51 and over age range and obtained a master or higher degree.

Staff size was also collected from special education directors and 33 special education directors responded to this question. The number of mild disabilities special education teachers on staff ranged from 18 to 150 with an average staff size of 75. One special education director reported having personnel spread across three school corporations and another reported having staff spread across six corporations.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Analysis with Constructs

My research explored the perceptions of special education directors, elementary school principals, and mild disabilities special education teachers around the constructs of roles, support, time/scheduling, and professional development issues. Because I thought there were differences among the subject population concerning these subject categories my hypothesis

stated there were differences in the perceptions of these professionals concerning the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers. The null hypothesis stated there were no differences in the perceptions of special education directors, elementary school principals, and mild disabilities special education teachers concerning how mild disabilities special education teachers are utilized in the elementary school setting.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations across subject groups.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations

Constructs	Participants	n	Mean	SD
Roles	Principals	55	11.80	3.015
	Sp. Ed. Teachers	90	11.64	3.156
	Sp. Ed. Directors	36	12.56	2.903
Time/Scheduling	Principals	55	16.82	2.646
	Sp. Ed Teachers	90	19.98	3.190
	Sp. Ed. Directors	36	19.42	4.693
Support	Principals	55	13.22	2.891
	Sp. Ed. Teachers	90	16.70	4.032
	Sp. Ed. Directors	36	18.58	3.008
Professional Development	Principals	55	16.76	3.661
	Sp. Ed. Teachers	90	21.62	4.183
	Sp. Ed. Directors	36	19.06	3.978

Note: Special Ed. Teacher=Mild Disabilities Special Education Teacher

The means and standard deviations of each subject group indicated there may have been significant differences between groups concerning survey item responses. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used because I wanted to know if differences between the means of subject groups were significant. In order to perform an ANOVA test with valid results, it was important to know if the subject groups involved in the study had equal variances. The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances showed homogeneity of variance for the roles (p =.541) and professional development (p=.726) data sets.

Since the Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances did not indicate homogeneity of variance for the support and time/scheduling data sets, other tests were used to investigate the equality of the means. Table 3 shows the results of the Welch and Brown-Forsythe tests for the support and time/scheduling data sets.

Table 3

Robust Tests of Equality of Means: Support and Time/Scheduling

Construct	Test	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Support	Welch	39.283	2	96.970	.000
	Brown-Forsythe	33.420	2	156.711	.000
Time/ Scheduling	Welch	21.224	2	81.394	.000
	Brown-Forsythe	12.756	2	79.330	.000

Note: Significant at the $p<.05$ level

The Levene, Welch, and Brown-Forsythe tests showed homogeneity of variance among subject groups for support and time/scheduling data sets.

An ANOVA was completed for the roles, support, time/scheduling, and professional development data sets and Table 4 depicts those results.

Table 4

Analysis of Variance

Construct	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Roles	21.766	2	10.883	1.158	.316
Support	709.918	2	354.959	28.525	.000
Time/Sched.	352.516	2	176.258	15.268	.000
Professional Dev.	820.962	2	410.481	25.773	.000

Note: Significant at the $p<0.05$ level; Highly significant at the $p< .01$ level; Very Highly Significant at the $p<.001$ level (Rosner, 2005)

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed significant differences for the support, time/scheduling, and professional development data sets. The null hypothesis is rejected for support, time/scheduling and professional development data sets. The results for support, time/scheduling, and professional development were considered to be very highly significant. The null hypothesis for the roles data set was not rejected, indicating no significant differences among participant group response means.

The ANOVA showed significant differences existed, but did not indicate between which groups those significant differences took place. The Dunnett T3 post hoc test delineated between which subject groups those significant differences occurred. Table 5 shows the results of the post hoc Dunnett T3 test which further defined the significant differences found in the ANOVA (Table 4) for the support data set.

Table 5

Dunnett T3 Test: Support Data Set

		Mean			95% CI	
(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Difference	SE	Sig.	*LL*	*UL*
Teachers	Principals	3.482	.577	.000	2.09	4.88
	Directors	-1.883	.657	.016	-3.48	-.28
Principals	Teachers	-3.482	.577	.000	-4.88	-2.09
	Directors	-5.365	.635	.000	-6.92	-3.81
Directors	Teachers	1.883	.657	.016	.28	3.48
	Principals	5.365	.635	.000	3.81	6.92

Note: Significant at the $p<.05$ level; Highly significant at the $p< .01$ level; Very Highly Significant at the $p<.001$ level (Rosner, 2005). Teachers= Mild Disabilities Special Education Teachers.

Very highly significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals as well as principals and special education directors. Survey items for this data set attempted to explore what support barriers may surface for mild disabilities special education teachers at elementary schools. The Dunnett T3 test showed differences in opinions regarding the support survey items, which included principals scheduling meetings, feelings of support from staff, IEPs being followed with fidelity, and collaborating opportunities between general education and special education teachers.

The Dunnett T3 test was also completed to further define what significant differences existed among the time/scheduling subject groups' means. Table 6 represents the results from the Dunnett T3 test.

Table 6

Dunnett T3 Test: Time/Scheduling Data Set

(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	Sig.	95% CI *LL*	95% CI *UL*
Teachers	Principals	3.160	.490	.000	1.97	4.35
	Directors	.561	.851	.882	-1.54	2.66
Principals	Teachers	-3.160	.490	.000	-4.35	-1.97
	Directors	-2.598	.860	.012	-4.72	-.48
DSirectors	Teachers	-.561	.851	.882	-2.66	1.54
	Principals	2.598	.012	.012	.48	4.72

Note: Significant at the p< .05 level; Highly significant at the *p*< .01 level; Very Highly Significant at the *p*<.001 level (Rosner, 2005). Teachers=Mild disabilities special education teachers.

The Dunnett's T3 test showed there were very highly significant differences in the means between special education mild disabilities teachers and principals and significant differences between special education directors and principals. There were no significant differences found between special education directors and special education mild disabilities teachers which were mirrored in Table 2. These survey items explored time and scheduling difficulties experienced by special education staff. Differences of opinions included being able to: schedule time to "push in" to the general education classroom, schedule small group instruction, keep small groups small in size, schedule time to collaborate with general education teachers, and have time within the duty day to plan lessons.

Table 7 represents results from the Bonferroni Test for the professional development data

Table 7

Bonferroni Test: Professional Development

(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	Sig.	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Teachers	Principals	4.86	.683	.000	3.21	6.51
	Directors	2.57	.787	.004	.66	4.47
Principals	Teachers	-4.86	.683	.000	-6.51	-3.21
	Directors	-2.29	.856	.024	-4.36	-.22
Directors	Teachers	-2.57	.787	.004	-4.47	-.66
	Principals	2.29	.856	.024	.22	4.36

Note: Significant at the p<.05 level; Highly significant at the *p*< .01 level; Very Highly Significant at the *p*<.001 level (Rosner, 2005). Teachers=Mild disabilities special education teachers.

set. The Bonferroni test was completed with the professional development data set in order to further determine between which subject groups significant differences existed. Results of the Bonferroni test indicated very highly significant differences between special education mild disabilities teachers and principals, highly significant differences between special education mild disabilities teachers and special education directors, and significant differences between principals and special education directors. These survey items explored possible professional development barriers facing mild disabilities special education teachers because their roles and responsibilities differ from general education teachers and school system wide they are fewer in number. Their professional development needs may differ from the general education teaching staff.

I wanted to determine if one of the factors of age, years in current position, or educational level affected any of the responses for the roles, support, time/scheduling, or professional development data sets. The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was calculated for each data set to determine homogeneity of variance (See Appendix J) so that a Two-Way ANOVA could be completed. The Levene's Test showed homogeneity of variance for the roles data set when paired with age and educational level factors (p=.854). A Two-Way ANOVA was completed to determine if the dependent variable roles were affected by the factors of age and educational level. Table 8 represents the results of the Two-Way ANOVA.

Table 8

Two-Way ANOVA: Roles: Age/Educational Level

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	80.631	2	40.315	4.516	.012
Educational Level	21.342	2	10.671	1.195	.305
Age/Educational Level	97.616	4	24.404	2.734	.031

Note: Significant at the p<.05 level

There was a statistically significant interaction between age and educational level for the roles data set. A significant difference exists between age groups on the roles scores: age was found to be a main factor while educational level was not.

Homogeneity of variance was demonstrated through results of the Levene's Test for the roles data set when paired with years in current position and educational level factors (p=.780). Table 9 shows results of the Two-Way ANOVA.

Table 9

Two-Way ANOVA: Roles: Years in Current Position/Educational Level

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Years in Position	57.052	2	28.526	3.187	.044
Educational Level	32.215	2	16.107	1.799	.169
Years in Position/Educational Level	48.585	4	12.146	1.357	.251

Note: Significant at the p<.05 level

There was not a statistically significant interaction between years in current position and educational level on the roles scores. There was a statistically significant difference in roles scores between the years in current position groups of 1-5 years, 6-15 years, and 16 years and up. The main effect of educational level was not significant, but the main effect of years in current position was significant.

The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances revealed homogeneity of variance for the support data set when paired with years in current position and educational level factors (p=.117). Table 10 shows the results of the Two-Way ANOVA for the support data set.

Table 10

Two-Way ANOVA: Support: Years in Current Position/Educational Level

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Years in Position	200.928	2	100.464	6.586	.002
Educational Level	67.969	2	33.985	2.228	.111
Years in Position/Educational Level	114.642	4	28.661	1.879	.116

Note: Significant at the p<.05 level

A statistically significant interaction was not found between years in current position and educational level for the support scores. There was not a statistically significant difference in support scores between educational levels (bachelor degree, master degree, and doctorate/educational specialist). A statistically significant difference between years in current position levels (1-6, 6-15, and 16+) was found.

Homogeneity of variance was shown through the Levene's Test for the time/scheduling data set when paired with the factors of age and educational level (p=.315). Table 11 shows the results of the Two-Way ANOVA.

Table 11

Two-Way ANOVA: Time/Scheduling: Age/ Educational Level

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	45.811	2	22.906	1.893	.154
Educational Level	130.779	2	65.390	5.403	.005
Age/Educational Level	64.794	4	16.198	1.338	.258

Note: Significant at the p<.05 level

There was not a statistically significant interaction between the factors of age and educational level for the time/scheduling scores. No statistically significant difference was found between the age levels for the time/scheduling scores. There was a statistically significant difference in the time/scheduling scores between the educational levels of bachelor degree, master degree, and doctorate/educational specialist.

Table 12 shows results of the Two-Way ANOVA for the time/scheduling data set when

Table 12

Two-Way ANOVA: Time/Scheduling: Years in Current Position/Educational Level

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Years in Position	45.082	2	22.541	1.869	.157
Educational Level	106.209	2	53.104	4.402	.014
Years in Position/Educational Level	20.856	4	5.165	.428	.788

Note: Significant at the p<.05 level

paired with the factors of years in current position and educational level. The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances showed homogeneity of variance for the time/scheduling data set (p=.156). A statistically significant interaction was not found between the factors of years in current position and educational level for the time/scheduling scores. There was no statistically significant difference between the years in current position levels (1-5, 6-15, and 16+ years) for the time/scheduling scores. There was a statistically significant difference in time/scheduling scores between those with bachelor degrees, master degrees, and doctorate/educational specialist degrees.

Homogeneity of variance was found using the Levene's Test for the professional development data set paired with the factors of age and educational level (p=.066). Table 13 shows the results of the Two-Way ANOVA.

Table 13

Two-Way ANOVA: Professional Development: Age/ Educational Level

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	16.246	2	8.123	.443	.643
Educational Level	142.256	2	71.128	3.880	.022
Age/Educational Level	137.655	4	34.414	1.877	.117

Note: Significant at the p<.05 level

There was not a statistically significant interaction found between the factors of age and educational level for the professional development scores. There was not a statistical difference between age levels (21-35, 36-50, and 51+ years of age) for professional development. There was a statistical difference in professional development scores between those with bachelor degrees, master degrees, and doctorate/educational specialist degrees.

The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances showed homogeneity of variance for the professional development data set when paired with the factors of years in current position and educational level (p=.065). Table 14 shows results of the Two-Way ANOVA.

Table 14

Two-Way ANOVA: Professional Development: Years in Current Position/Educational Level

Source	Type III SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Years in Position	27.907	2	13.953	.754	.472
Educational Level	207.303	2	103.652	5.603	.004
Years in Position/Educational Level	21.043	4	5.261	.284	.888

Note: Significant at the $p<.05$level

A statistically significant interaction was not found between the factors of years in current position and educational level for the professional development scores. There was no statistically significant difference between the years in current position levels (1-5, 6-15, and 16+ years) for professional development scores. There was a statistically significant difference in professional development scores between those who held bachelor degrees, master degrees, and doctorate/educational specialist degrees.

Factor Analysis of Survey Items

The ANOVAs calculated for the data sets indicated significant differences among survey participants but not for separate survey items. A factor analysis was used to determine if significant differences occurred among survey respondents concerning specific survey items.

The Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances revealed homogeneity of variance for the roles survey items found in Table 15. An ANOVA was completed and results are specified in Table 15. The ANOVA showed significant difference for only one survey item.

Table 15

ANOVA: Special Education Teacher Roles

Roles Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Directors			df	F
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD		
The special education teacher is expected to incorporate at risk general education students into small group instruction with special education students.	55	2.07	.716	90	1.88	.846	36	2.14	.723	2	1.873

(continued)

Roles Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Directors			df	F
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD		
A special education teacher (not including speech language pathologist) is a part of a student assistance team.	55	1.45	.689	89	1.74	.819	36	1.58	.604	2	2.605
The special education teacher is expected to be "on call" when special education students need behavior intervention.	55	1.93	.742	90	1.52	.657	36	1.81	.749	2	6.169**
Special education teachers are expected to be on data teams with general education teachers to look at student data.	55	1.47	.604	90	1.69	.713	36	1.67	.632	2	1.913
Special education teachers are expected to push in to classrooms to assist special education and general education students as well as having small group instruction groups with special education students.	55	1.58	.658	89	1.42	.636	36	1.64	.593	2	2.076

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

A Welch ANOVA was completed for the survey items that did not show equal variances through the Levene's Test. Table 16 shows the results of the Welch ANOVA.

Table 16

Welch ANOVA: Roles

Roles Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Directors			*df1*	*df2*	Welch
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD			
The special education teacher is expected to assist with at risk general education students	55	1.91	.701	90	1.71	.753	35	1.97	.568	2	95.295	2.501
A special education teacher is a part of the school wide planning team.	55	1.38	.490	89	1.74	.776	36	1.81	1.167	2	80.902	6.738**

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The Welch ANOVA shows a significant difference for only one of the roles survey items and it was significant at the p<.01 level.

According to the Levene test, homogeneity of variance was shown for the support survey items found in Table 17 and the table shows the completed ANOVA.

Table 17

ANOVA: Support

Support Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Director				
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	df	F
The general education teachers are supportive of the efforts of the special education teachers within my building.	53	1.72	.533	90	1.90	.794	36	2.33	.586	2	8.859***
General education teachers collaborate with special education teachers to develop IEPs.	55	1.78	.658	90	2.26	.728	36	2.50	.609	2	13.695***
Special education teachers feel supported by staff within the school.	55	1.78	.534	89	1.98	.768	36	2.36	.764	2	7.424**

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The data in Table 17 shows significant differences of opinion among survey participants concerning support items. Two of the items were significant at the p<.001 level and one item was significant at the p<.01 level.

Table 18 shows the ANOVA calculated for the support survey items not having equal variance according to the Levene test. All five support survey items were found to have significant differences at the p<.001 level.

Table 18

Welch ANOVA: Support

Support Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Directors					
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	*df1*	*df2*	Welch
The principal is available to meet and discuss special education concerns.	55	1.29	.458	90	1.56	.638	36	2.06	.826	2	83.498	13.931***
The principal schedules meetings to discuss special education concerns.	55	1.60	.564	90	2.20	.796	35	2.37	1.031	2	81.481	17.616***
The principal regularly schedules meetings to discuss special education students and/or concerns.	55	1.93	.604	90	2.54	.810	36	2.81	1.064	2	83.30	18.419***
General education and special education teachers have opportunities to meet and collaborate/ discuss special education students' IEPs.	55	1.65	.517	90	2.38	.815	36	2.64	.899	2	85.69	30.690***
General education teachers follow IEP recommendations.	55	1.53	.504	88	1.95	.605	36	2.50	1.056	2	79.24	18.688***

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

One of the time/scheduling survey items was found to have equal variance according to the Levene test and Table 19 shows the results of the ANOVA.

Table 19

ANOVA: Time/Scheduling

Time/Scheduling Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Director				
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	df	F
Special education teachers are able to make time within their duty day for planning and collaborating with general education teachers in order to develop Individualized Educational Plans for students.	55	2.24	.666	90	3.21	.711	36	2.53	.810	2	34.163***

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The survey item was found to be significant at the $p<.001$ level and indicated significant differences of opinion among survey participants.

Table 20 shows results of the Welch ANOVA for seven time/scheduling survey items.

Table 20

Welch ANOVA: Time and Scheduling

Time/Scheduling Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Directors					
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	*df1*	*df2*	Welch
Special education teachers have time to push in to the classroom to support special education and at risk general education students.	55	1.93	.742	89	2.38	.873	36	2.47	.910	2	88.007	7.146**
Some special education small group instruction (3-5 students) has become a large group because at risk students have been placed in those groups for intervention purposes.	55	2.85	.705	90	2.10	.887	35	2.50	1.183	2	83.042	15.886***
Special education teachers have time for pull-out small group instruction which does not detract from in class large group instruction.	55	2.13	.640	90	2.59	.886	36	2.47	.810	2	90.981	6.937**
Special education teachers have time to be on school committees.	55	1.60	.564	90	2.44	.781	36	2.11	.708	2	91.208	28.612***
Special education teachers are able to make time within their duty day for planning small group lessons.	54	2.11	.604	90	2.86	.906	36	2.22	.637	2	97.860	18.709***
Special education teachers are able to collaborate with paraprofessionals and general education teachers.	55	2.00	.577	89	2.96	.782	36	2.31	.951	2	84.642	35.343***
Special education teachers struggle with scheduling students, lesson planning, IEP development, and progress monitoring because of time and scheduling constraints.	55	2.00	.667	96	1.47	.695	36	1.89	.747	2	87.30	10.002***

Note: *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$

There were five survey items with significant differences at the $p<.001$ level and two items with significant differences at the $p<.01$ level.

The Levene's test was used and five professional development survey items were found to have equal variance. Table 21 shows the results of the ANOVA for the professional development survey items.

Table 21

ANOVA: Professional Development

Professional Development Survey Items	Elementary Principals			Special Ed. Teachers			Special Ed. Directors			df	F
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD		
Professional development has been developed on collaboration between special education and general education teachers for our building.	55	2.20	.755	90	2.87	.801	36	2.44	.877	2	12.266***
Professional development with special education students in mind according to the needs of the faculty has been created for our building.	55	2.05	.705	90	2.91	.713	36	2.39	.688	2	26.264***
Professional development on how teachers can effectively work with teacher's assistants/ paraprofessionals has been developed for our building.	55	2.51	.635	90	3.08	.691	36	2.69	.749	2	12.580***
Special education teachers receive district level professional development on collaboration with general education teachers.	54	2.11	.744	90	2.86	.842	36	2.56	.695	2	15.149***
Special education teachers receive district level professional development on effectively working with paraprofessionals.	55	2.49	.690	89	3.08	.727	36	2.69	.749	2	12.024***

Note: *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$

The ANOVA indicated significant differences among survey participants at the $p<.001$ level.

Table 22 shows results of the Welch ANOVA for the three survey items not found to have equal variance according to the Levene test. Significant differences were found for two of the survey items. They were significant at the $p<.01$ level and $p<.001$ level.

Table 22

Welch ANOVA: Professional Development

Professional Development Survey Items	Elementary Principals n	M	SD	Special Ed. Teachers n	M	SD	Special Ed. Directors n	M	SD	*df1*	*df2*	Welch
Special education teachers are encouraged to seek out independent professional development opportunities (outside of district or building initiatives).	55	2.13	.771	90	2.46	.876	35	2.31	.718	2	92.675	2.766
Special education teachers are expected to attend school wide professional development because it applies to all students within the building.	55	1.33	.474	90	1.52	.640	38	1.67	.478	2	97.158	5.760**
New special education teachers receive professional development for expected roles/responsibilities at the building level.	52	2.10	.603	90	2.89	.771	36	2.36	.798	2	87.066	23.430***

Note: *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$, ***$p<.001$

Post hoc tests were conducted so that specific significant differences among participants could be revealed. The Bonferroni test was completed for the survey items in Table 23 because they were found to have equal variance. Table 23 shows the results for the Bonferroni test. Significant differences were found between principals and mild disabilities special education teachers concerning special education teachers being “on call” when special education students require a behavior intervention. Differences between these two participant groups were significant at the $p<.01$ level. Mild disabilities special education teachers strongly agreed they

Table 23

Bonferroni Test: Roles

Roles Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95% CI *LL*	95% CI *UL*
The special education teacher is expected to incorporate at risk general education students into small group instruction with special education students	Teachers	Principals	-.195	.134	-.52	.13
		Directors	-.261	.155	-.64	.11
	Principals	Teachers	.195	.134	-.13	.52
		Directors	-.066	.168	-.47	.34
	Directors	Teachers	.261	.155	-.11	.64
		Principal	.066	.168	-.34	.47
A special education teacher (not including speech language pathologist) a part of a student assistance team.	Teachers	Principals	.287	.127	-.02	.59
		Directors	.158	.147	-.20	.51
	Principals	Teachers	-.287	.127	-.59	.02
		Directors	-.129	.159	-.51	.26
	Directors	Teachers	-.158	.147	-.51	.20
		Principals	.129	.159	-.26	.51
The special education teacher is expected to be "on call" when special education students need behavior intervention.	Teachers	Principals	-.405**	.120	-.70	-.11
		Directors	-.283	.139	-.62	.05
	Principals	Teachers	.405**	.120	.11	.70
		Directors	.122	.151	-.24	.49
	Directors	Teachers	.283	.139	-.05	.62
		Principals	-.122	.151	-.49	.24
Special education teachers are expected to be on data teams with general education teachers to look at student data (acuity, classroom formative assessments, ISTEP+, etc.) and develop interventions for students who are not successful with state standards.	Teachers	Principals	.216	.114	-.06	.49
		Directors	.022	.131	-.30	.34
	Principals	Teachers	-.216	.114	-.49	.06
		Directors	-.194	.143	-.54	.15
	Directors	Teachers	-.022	.131	-.34	.30
		Principals	.194	.143	-.15	.54
Special education teachers are expected to push in to classrooms to assist special education and general education students as well as having small group instruction groups with special education students.	Teachers	Principals	-.166	.109	-.43	.10
		Directors	-.223	.125	-.53	.08
	Principals	Teachers	.166	.109	-.10	.43
		Directors	-.057	.136	-.39	.27
	Directors	Teachers	.223	.125	-.08	.53
		Principals	.057	.136	-.27	.39

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

are on call when special education students misbehave and require a behavior intervention.

Principal responses did not show strong agreement.

The Dunnett T3 post hoc test was used to determine between which participant groups significant differences occurred for the survey items in the roles data set and Table 24 shows the results of the test.

Table 24

Dunnett T3: Roles

Roles Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95%CI *LL*	95%CI *UL*
The special education teacher is expected to assist with at risk general education students	Teachers	Principals	-.198	.123	-.50	.10
		Directors	-.260	.125	-.56	.04
	Principals	Teachers	.198	.123	-.10	.50
		Directors	-.062	.135	-.39	.27
	Directors	Teachers	.260	.125	-.04	.56
		Principals	.062	.135	-.27	.39
A special education teacher is a part of the school wide planning team.	Teachers	Principals	.360**	.106	.10	.61
		Directors	-.064	.211	-.59	.46
	Principals	Teachers	-.360**	.106	-.61	-.10
		Directors	-.424	.205	-.93	.09
	Directors	Teachers	.064	.211	-.46	.59
		Principals	.424	.205	-.09	.93

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and elementary school principals. Differences were significant at the p<.01 level. This survey item was associated with special education teachers being a part of the school-wide planning team. Principals strongly agreed with this statement and none disagreed. Mild disabilities special education teachers did not strongly agree and a number showed disagreement.

The Bonferroni test was completed for the support data set survey items found in Table 25 and results show significant differences between survey participants for all three survey items.

Table 25

Bonferroni Test: Support

Support Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95% CI *LL*	95% CI *UL*
The general education teachers are supportive of the efforts of the special education teachers within my building.	Teachers	Principals	.183	.117	-.10	.47
		Directors	-.433**	.133	-.76	-.11
	Principals	Teachers	-.183	.117	-.47	.10
		Directors	-.616***	.148	-.97	-.26
	Directors	Teachers	.433**	.133	.11	.76
		Principals	.616***	.148	-.26	.97
General education teachers collaborate with special education teachers to develop IEPs.	Teachers	Principals	.474***	.117	.19	.76
		Directors	-.244	.135	-.57	.08
	Principals	Teachers	-.474***	.117	-.76	-.19
		Directors	-.718***	.147	-1.07	-.36
	Directors	Teachers	.244	.135	-.08	.57
		Principals	.718***	.147	.36	1.07
Special education teachers feel supported by staff within the school.	Teachers	Principals	.196	.121	-.10	.49
		Directors	-.384*	.139	-.72	-.05
	Principals	Teachers	-.196	.121	-.49	.10
		Directors	-.579**	.151	-.94	-.21
	Directors	Teachers	.384*	.139	.05	.72
		Principals	.579**	.151	.21	.94

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The first survey item addressed general education teachers being supportive of the efforts of special education teachers and significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors as well as principals and special education directors. Principals showed strong agreement while special education directors' responses revealed weak agreement leaning toward disagreement. Mild disabilities special education teachers did not show strong agreement with the survey item.

Another survey item explored the collaboration between general education teachers and mild disabilities special education teachers to develop IEPs. Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and principals and special

education directors. Special education directors were evenly split between agreement and disagreement while principals indicated strong agreement. Mild disabilities special education teachers did not strongly agree IEP collaboration with general education teachers exists.

The last survey item concerned the support special education teachers feel they receive from school staff. Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors as well as principals and special education directors. Principals and mild disabilities special education teachers agreed special education teachers feel supported by school staff. Special education directors did not strongly agree with the survey item and one special education director indicated no knowledge.

The Dunnett T3 test was used for the support survey items of unequal variance. Table 26 depicts the results of the Dunnett T3 test. Significant differences were found among survey participants for all five of the support survey items. The first survey item explored principal availability for meetings to discuss special education concerns with mild disabilities special education teachers. Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors, mild disabilities special education teachers and principals, and principals and special education directors. All principal respondents agreed while mild disabilities special education teachers did not strongly agree. Special education directors' responses showed weak agreement and one special education director reported no knowledge.

Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals as well as between principals and special education directors for the survey item

Table 26

Dunnett T3: Support

Support Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95%CI *LL*	95%CI *UL*
The principal is available to meet and discuss special education concerns.	Teachers	Principals	.265*	.091	.04	.49
		Directors	-.500**	.153	-.88	-.12
	Principals	Teachers	-.265*	.091	-.49	-.04
		Directors	-.765***	.151	-1.14	-.39
	Directors	Teachers	.500**	.153	.12	.88
		Principals	.765***	.151	.39	1.14
The principal schedules meetings to discuss special education concerns.	Teachers	Principals	.600***	.113	.33	.87
		Directors	-.171	.193	-.65	.31
	Principals	Teachers	-.600***	.113	-.87	-.33
		Directors	-.771***	.190	-1.24	-.30
	Directors	Teachers	.171	.193	-.31	.65
		Principals	.771***	.190	.30	1.24
The principal regularly schedules meetings to discuss special education students and/or concerns.	Teachers	Principals	.617***	.118	.33	.90
		Directors	-.261	.197	-.75	.22
	Principals	Teachers	-.617***	.118	-.90	-.33
		Directors	-.878***	.195	-1.36	-.40
	Directors	Teachers	.261	.197	-.22	.75
		Principals	.878***	.195	.40	1.36
General education and special education teachers have opportunities to meet and collaborate/ discuss special education students' IEPs.	Teachers	Principals	.723***	.111	.46	.99
		Directors	-.261	.173	-.69	.16
	Principals	Teachers	-.723***	.111	-.99	-.46
		Directors	-.984***	.165	-1.39	-.58
	Directors	Teachers	.261	.173	-.16	.69
		Principals	.984***	.165	.58	1.39
General education teachers follow IEP recommendations.	Teachers	Principals	.427***	.094	.20	.65
		Directors	-.545*	.187	-1.01	-.08
	Principals	Teachers	-.427***	.094	-.65	-.20
		Directors	-.973***	.189	-1.44	-.51
	Directors	Teachers	.545*	.187	.08	1.01
		Principals	.973***	.189	.51	1.44

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

about principals scheduling meetings to discuss special education concerns. Principals indicated strong agreement while mild disabilities special education teachers indicated agreement with a number of disagreement responses recorded. Special education directors indicated weak agreement and three reported they did not know if the principals scheduled those meetings.

The topic of principals regularly scheduling meetings was the next support survey item explored. Table 26 shows significant differences between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and principals and special education directors. Mild disabilities special education teachers and special education teachers did not agree. There were four special education directors who reported they did not know if principals regularly scheduled meetings. Principal respondents agreed that they regularly schedule meetings with mild disabilities special education teachers.

The topic of general education and special education teachers having opportunities to meet and collaborate about or discuss IEPs was explored. Significant differences were shown between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and between principals and special education directors. Special education directors were evenly divided between agreement and disagreement and two indicated no knowledge. Responses revealed principals strongly agreed there were collaboration opportunities available between teachers while the teachers did not strongly agree.

The final survey item was concerned with general education teachers following IEP recommendations. Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals, mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors, as well as between principals and special education directors. Principals showed strong agreement with none disagreeing. Mild disabilities special education teachers did

not indicate strong agreement. The special education directors' responses showed weak agreement and four directors reported no knowledge.

The Bonferroni test was calculated for one time/scheduling survey item. Analysis showed significant differences among survey participants for the time/scheduling survey item. Results from the Bonferroni test are depicted in Table 27.

The survey item was concerned with the ability of special education teachers to schedule time with general education teachers in order to develop student IEPs. Significant differences

Table 27

Bonferroni Test: Time/Scheduling

Time/Scheduling Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95% CI *LL*	95% CI *UL*
Special education teachers have time within their duty day for planning and collaborating with general education teachers in order to develop Individualized Educational Plans for students.	Teachers	Principals	.975***	.123	.68	1.27
		Directors	.683***	.142	.34	1.03
	Principals	Teachers	-.975***	.123	-1.27	-.68
		Directors	-.291	.154	-.66	.08
	Directors	Teachers	-.683***	.142	-1.03	-.34
		Principals	.291	.154	-.08	.66

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals, and mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors. Mild disabilities special education teachers did not agree there is time for IEP collaboration with general education teachers while principals agreed. Special education directors were evenly split between agreement and disagreement.

The Dunnett T3 test was completed for the other time/scheduling survey items, which did not exhibit equal variance. Table 28 shows the results of the post hoc Dunnett T3 test for the time/scheduling survey items. Analysis showed significant differences among survey participants for all seven time/scheduling survey items.

Table 28

Dunnett T3: Time/Scheduling

Time/Scheduling Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95%CI *LL*	95%CI *UL*
Special education teachers have time to push in to the classroom to support special education and at risk general education students.	Teachers	Principals	.455**	.136	.13	.78
		Directors	-.090	.178	-.53	.35
	Principals	Teachers	-.455**	.136	-.78	-.13
		Directors	-.545*	.182	-.99	-.10
	Directors	Teachers	.090	.178	-.35	.53
		Principals	.545*	.182	.10	.99
Some special education small group instruction (3-5 students) has become a large group because at risk students have been placed in those groups for intervention purposes.	Teachers	Principals	-.755***	.133	-1.08	-.43
		Directors	-.400	.218	-.94	.14
	Principals	Teachers	.755***	.133	.43	1.08
		Directors	.355	.219	-.19	.89
	Directors	Teachers	.400	.218	-.14	.94
		Principals	-.355	.219	-.89	.19
Special education teachers have time for pull-out small group instruction which does not detract from in class large group instruction.	Teachers	Principals	.462**	.127	.15	.77
		Directors	.117	.164	-.28	.52
	Principals	Teachers	-.462**	.127	-.77	-.15
		Directors	-.345	.160	-.74	.05
	Directors	Teachers	-.117	.164	-.52	.28
		Directors	.345	.160	-.05	.74
Special education teachers have time to be on school committees.	Teachers	Principals	.844***	.112	.57	1.12
		Directors	.333	.144	-.02	.68
	Principals	Teachers	-.844***	.112	-1.12	-.57
		Directors	-.511**	.140	-.86	-.17
	Directors	Teachers	-.333	.144	-.68	.02
		Principals	.511**	.140	.17	.86
Special education teachers are able to make time within their duty day for planning small group lessons.	Teachers	Principals	.744***	.126	.44	1.05
		Directors	.633***	.143	.29	.98
	Principals	Teachers	-.744***	.126	-1.05	-.44
		Directors	-.111	.134	-.44	.22
	Directors	Teachers	-.633***	.143	-.98	-.29
		Principals	.111	.134	-.22	.44
Special education teachers are able to collaborate with paraprofessionals and general education teachers within their duty day	Teachers	Principals	.955***	.114	.68	1.23
		Directors	.650**	.179	.21	1.09
	Principals	Teachers	-.955***	.114	-1.23	-.68
		Directors	-.306	.177	-.74	.13
	Directors	Teachers	-.650**	.179	-1.09	-.21
		Principals	.306	.177	-.13	.74

(continued)

Time/Scheduling Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95%CL *LL*	95%CL *UL*
Special education teachers struggle with scheduling students, lesson planning, IEP development, and progress monitoring because of time and scheduling constraints.	Teachers	Principals	-.500***	.117	-.78	-.22
		Directors	-.389*	.145	-.74	-.03
	Principals	Teachers	.500***	.117	.22	.78
		Directors	.111	.154	-.26	.49
	Directors	Teachers	.389*	.145	.03	.74
		Principals	-.111	.154	-.49	.26

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The first survey item was about special education teachers having time to "push in" to the general education classroom to assist special education and at risk general education students. Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals as well as between principals and special education directors. Mild disabilities special education teachers were almost evenly divided between agreement and disagreement. Principals' responses showed agreement while special education directors' responses did not reveal strong agreement.

The next survey item addressed the concern of special education small group instruction turning into larger groups because at risk general education students have been placed in those groups for intervention purposes. Significant differences were shown between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals. Mild disabilities special education teachers strongly agreed while principals disagreed.

Another time/scheduling survey item explored special education teachers having time for pull out small group instruction that does not detract from classroom large group instruction. Once again, significant differences were noted between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals. Mild disabilities special education teachers were divided between agreement and disagreement concerning this time/scheduling issue. Principals agreed special

education teachers have time for small group instruction that does not detract from large group instruction.

The following survey item was about special education teachers having time to be on school committees. There were significant differences revealed between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals as well as between principals and special education directors. Mild disabilities special education teachers did not strongly agree because a number of responses indicated disagreement. Principals strongly agreed that special education teachers have time to be on school committees while special education directors were not in strong agreement.

Another time/scheduling survey item was about special education teachers being able to make time within their duty day to plan small group lessons. Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and special education directors and mild disabilities special education teachers. Principals and special education directors agreed teachers have planning time within their duty day. Mild disabilities special education teachers did not agree they had time for planning small group lessons.

The next time/scheduling survey item explored special education teachers being able to collaborate with paraprofessionals and general education teachers within their duty day. Significant differences were noted between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals, mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors, and principals and special education directors. Mild disabilities special education teachers did not agree while principals agreed. Special education directors were almost evenly divided between agreement and disagreement.

The last time/scheduling survey item explored the struggle special education teachers experience with scheduling students, lesson planning, developing IEPs, and monitoring progress

because of time constraints. Significant differences were observed between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors. Mild disabilities special education teachers strongly agreed they struggled with this issue while principals and special education directors did not strongly agree.

The Bonferroni post hoc test was used to delineate significant differences among survey participants for the professional development data set survey items because these items were found to have equal variance. Table 29 shows results from the Bonferroni test and significant differences were found among survey participants for all five survey items.

Table 29

Bonferroni Test: Professional Development

Professional Development Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95% CI *LL*	95% CI *UL*
Professional development has been developed concerning collaboration between special education and general education teachers for our building.	Teachers	Principals	.667***	.138	.33	1.00
		Directors	.422*	.159	.04	.81
	Principals	Teachers	-.667***	.138	-1.00	-.33
		Directors	-.244	.173	-.66	.17
	Directors	Teachers	-.422*	.159	-.81	-.04
		Principals	.244	.173	-.17	.66
Professional development with special education students in mind according to the needs of the faculty has been created for our building.	Teachers	Principals	.857***	.121	.56	1.15
		Directors	.522**	.139	.19	.86
	Principals	Teachers	-.857***	.121	-1.15	-.56
		Directors	-.334	.151	-.70	.03
	Directors	Teachers	-.522**	.139	-.86	-.19
		Principals	.334	.151	-.03	.70
Professional development on how teachers can effectively work with teacher's assistants/ paraprofessionals has been developed for our building.	Teachers	Principals	.569***	.117	.28	.85
		Directors	.383*	.135	.06	.71
	Principals	Teachers	-.569***	.117	-.85	-.28
		Directors	-.185	.147	-.54	.17
	Directors	Teachers	-.383*	.135	-.71	-.06
		Principals	.185	.147	-.17	.54

(continued)

Professional Development Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95% CI *LL*	95% CI *UL*
Special education teachers receive district level professional development on collaboration with general education teachers.	Teachers	Principals	.744***	.135	.42	1.07
		Directors	.300	.155	-.07	.67
	Principals	Teachers	-.744***	.135	-1.07	-.42
		Directors	-.444*	.169	-.85	-.04
	Directors	Teachers	-.300	.155	-.67	.07
		Principals	.444	.169	.04	.85
Special education teachers receive district level professional development on effectively working with paraprofessionals.	Teachers	Principals	.588***	.124	.29	.89
		Directors	.384*	.142	.04	.73
	Principals	Teachers	-.588***	.124	-.89	-.29
		Directors	-.204	.154	-.58	.17
	Directors	Teachers	-.384*	.142	-.73	-.04
		Principals	.204	.154	-.17	.58

Note: Significant at the *p<.05 level ***p<.001 level; Teachers=Mild disabilities special education teachers.

The first professional development survey item was about the creation of professional development to address collaboration between general education and special education teachers within the elementary school. Significant differences were noted between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals as well as special education directors and mild disabilities special education teachers. Mild disabilities special education did not agree while principals and special education directors agreed. One special education director responded with an indication of no knowledge.

The second survey item was concerned about the creation of professional development with special education students in mind at the building level. Analysis showed significant differences between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and special education directors and mild disabilities special education teachers. Mild disabilities special education did not agree while principals and special education directors agreed this type of professional development occurred.

The next survey item explored if building level professional development has been designed on how special education teachers can effectively work with paraprofessionals within their building. Significant differences were observed between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals, and between mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors. Mild disabilities special education teachers indicated strong disagreement while special education directors and principals did not strongly disagree. Principals and special education directors chose a number of agree and disagree responses, which affected the mean.

The fourth survey item was concerned with the provision of district level professional development on collaboration with general education teachers. Significant differences were found between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and special education directors and principals. Mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors did not agree with the survey item. Principals agreed special education teachers receive district level professional development on collaboration with general education teachers.

The last survey item was about the provision of district level professional development about effectively working with paraprofessionals. There were significant differences noted between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals as well as special education directors and mild disabilities special education teachers. Mild disabilities special education teachers strongly disagreed while special education directors did not indicate strong disagreement. Principal respondents were almost evenly divided between agreement and disagreement.

The Dunnett T3 test was utilized to determine between which survey participants significant differences existed. Table 30 depicts the results of the Dunnett T3 test for the professional development survey items. Significant differences were found for two of the three

survey items. The first survey item explored the expectation of special education teachers attending school wide professional development sessions because it applies to all students within the school. Significant differences were found between principals and special education directors. Principals strongly agreed while responses indicated special education directors did not strongly agree.

Table 30

Dunnett T3: Professional Development

Professional Development Survey Items	(I) Respondent	(J) Respondent	Mean Difference	SE	95%CI *LL*	95%CI *UL*
Special education teachers are encouraged to seek out independent professional development opportunities.	Teachers	Principals	.328	.139	-.01	.66
		Directors	.141	.153	-.23	.51
	Principals	Teachers	-.328	.139	-.66	.01
		Directors	-.187	.160	-.58	.20
	Directors	Teachers	-.141	.153	-.51	.23
		Principals	.187	.160	-.20	.58
Special education teachers are expected to attend school wide professional development because it applies to all students within the building.	Teachers	Principals	.195	.093	-.03	.42
		Directors	-.144	.104	-.40	.11
	Principals	Teachers	-.195	.093	-.42	.03
		Directors	-.339**	.102	-.59	-.09
	Directors	Teachers	.144	.104	-.11	.40
		Principals	.339**	.102	.09	.59
New special education teachers receive professional development for expected roles/ responsibilities at the building level.	Teachers	Principals	.793***	.117	.51	1.07
		Directors	.528**	.156	.15	.91
	Principals	Teachers	-.793***	.117	-1.07	-.51
		Directors	-.265	.157	-.65	.12
	Directors	Teachers	-.528**	.156	-.91	-.15
		Principals	.265	.157	-.12	.65

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The last survey item was about new special education teachers receiving professional development for expected roles/responsibilities at the building level. Significant differences were noted between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals and special education directors and mild disabilities special education teachers. Mild disabilities special

education teachers did not agree while principals and special education directors agreed this type of professional development is provided.

Summary

My analysis indicated significant differences among special education directors, elementary school principals, and mild disabilities special education teachers for the support, time/scheduling, and professional development data sets. No significant differences were found between subjects concerning the roles of mild disabilities special education teachers. An additional factor analysis indicated significant differences between survey participants concerning many survey items for all of the data sets. Further analysis indicated a significant interaction between age and educational level concerning scores for special education teacher roles. Conclusions and implications about this data will be presented in chapter five.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Role Expectations

My first research question was: "What role expectations exist for mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?" I developed a table indicating which survey items corresponded to specific research questions (See Appendix G). There were 17 survey items associated with role expectations. Because my survey (See Appendix E and Appendix F) was arranged by subject category, the first seven survey response items were associated with special education teacher roles. Role expectation responses were found in six time/scheduling, two support, and two professional development survey items. The open-ended response question "What is the role of the special education teacher in respect to Response to Intervention (RtI) or helping general education students who demonstrate academic struggles?" also explored special education teacher roles.

Overall, 47 (85%) principal respondents, 86 (90%) special education teacher respondents, and 28 (78%) special education administrator respondents answered the open-ended question about special education teacher roles. Written responses were recorded by categories and coded (See Appendix I). Table 31 shows the categories and how many respondents provided information. Six separate categories were associated with my open-ended question concerning the role of the mild disabilities special education teachers in respect to assisting academically challenged general education students (See Appendix I).

Table 31

Roles: Open-ended Participant Responses

Role	Elementary Principals		Special Ed. Teachers		Special Ed. Administrators		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N
Interventionist	26	55	35	41	16	57	77
Team Member	30	64	34	40	12	43	76
Consultant	16	34	27	31	10	36	53
Not Team Member	0	0	5	6	2	7	7
Special Ed. Only	1	2	2	2	0	0	3
Like General Ed.	1	2	0	0	0	0	1

The special education teacher as an interventionist was mentioned most often by survey respondents. I placed responses in this category because a response included information about working directly with general education students in the general education classroom, small group setting, or through building intervention initiatives. Percentages show principals and special education directors mentioned interventionist almost equally. A representative response sample of the special education teacher as interventionist included:

- "They should be playing an active role to support students and teachers as times permits; special education students with IEPs are first priority."
- "Work general education students into groups already established if possible in the hopes of the student making gains without placement at this time."

- "Special education personnel are assigned a work group of 2-4 students with which to work at our RtI time at the beginning of each day."
- "We provide Tier 2 and 3 support to identified students, and include general education students in small groups."

Some of the responses from special education directors were global because they supervise special education services across different school districts or school buildings. One special education director said mild disabilities special education teachers provide general education interventions on a short term basis and building administrators would like the interventions to be long term.

Mild disabilities special education teachers as team members were mentioned almost as often as interventionist. In general, if a teacher was a team member, he/she would likely directly assist with at risk general education students. Percentages show most principals responded in this way to the question. I categorized participants as being a team member if the description included information about being a part of an RtI or student assistance team.

One principal, two mild disabilities special education teachers, and three special education directors gave global responses indicating what happens with the team member role varies by building or school district. Exemplar responses included:

- "Be part of the RtI building team offering suggestions for interventions. Help with interventions for some students at the Tier 3 level, prior to evaluation for special education."
- "The special education teacher is also a member of the RtI committee and provides assistance when students are to be referred to special education."

- "As any member of an RtI team, a special educator provides input to what supports a student may need."
- "Teacher is on RtI team. Helps develop RtI plans, fills out referral paperwork when the decision is made to refer for a special education evaluation."

Special education teacher as a consultant was the third largest response according to survey participants. There were 16 (34%) principal participants, 27 (31%) mild disabilities special education teacher participants, and 10 (36%) special education administrator participants who responded with consultant as a special education teacher role. I placed responses in this category when the key words or explanation indicated mild disabilities special education teachers served as a consultant. Some of these responses were also recorded as interventionist because mild disabilities special education teachers had a dual role. Responses about being consultants included:

- "Special education teachers become involved during Tier 3. Prior to that, special education teachers are involved through collaboration and consultation only."
- "To be a resource for strategies and programs to be implemented by the general education teacher or Title One."
- "It should be a supportive role, but general education teachers expect special education teachers to take over."
- "Our special education teacher(s) are part of our school resource team that plans needed interventions; however, they are not the ones to provide them until a student is identified."

Barriers

I created my second research question in association with possible barriers facing special education teacher use and it asked: "What barriers exist concerning the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?" The table in Appendix G shows which survey items were associated with barriers facing mild disabilities special education teachers.

I developed the open-ended question: "What barriers exist concerning the use of special education teachers within the elementary school system?" to coincide with the research question about barriers. Written responses were recorded and categorized in a table (See Appendix H). Overall, 45 (82%) principal respondents, 88 (92%) special education teacher respondents, and 28 (78%) special education administrator respondents replied to this question. Table 32 depicts the number of survey participant responses to the open-ended question about barriers.

Table 32

Barriers: Open-ended Participant Responses

Barrier	Elementary Principals		Special Ed. Teachers		Special Ed. Administrators		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N
Time/Scheduling	24	53	44	50	15	54	83
Caseload	21	47	17	19	08	29	46
Expectations	4	9	25	28	3	11	32
Staff/Budget	9	20	9	10	5	18	23
Curriculum	0	0	4	5	2	7	6
No Barriers	0	0	1	1	0	0	1

Six separate categories emerged as I looked through the written survey responses concerning barriers to using mild disabilities special education teachers within elementary schools. I coded each response in the category as well as having a positive, neutral, or negative tone (See Appendix H). A response was found to be positive if the general tone seemed less negative in its wording or formatting (e.g. I do not have major barriers because the students come

to me). I determined a neutral tone would be indicated by use of wording indicating no clues to being negative or positive (e.g. Same as general education). It was decided a negative tone would be a word(s) using capitalization, or punctuation, and/or an explanation with a less than positive connotation (e.g. TIME or No time to develop a cooperative learning environment). Many respondents provided information about more than one barrier when completing their explanation. If there was more than one concern mentioned, it was recorded in the appropriate category.

The subject of time and scheduling had the greatest number of responses and was about equal for the three subject groups. Responses were placed in this category if references were made about time and/or scheduling constraints. Elementary principals produced no positive or neutral responses and 25 negative responses concerning time and scheduling barriers. Mild disabilities special education teachers responded with no positive or neutral responses and 43 negative responses. Special education directors responded with no positive or neutral responses, and 15 negative responses. Across all subject groups, negative responses were the most prevalent.

Concerns about time/scheduling included:

- "Special education teachers are spread thin. Time is the biggest barrier to working collaboratively with general education teachers."
- "My special education staff has an extremely demanding schedule, with far less planning time than other teachers and far more paperwork."
- "When we are doing pullout with small groups, we must compete with speech, OT, PT; students aren't allowed to be pulled from math, reading, language arts, specials, recess or lunch."

- "Time is always a factor. My prep time does not coincide with the other teachers' prep times."
- "With so many compliance dates, move in conferences, revisions of IEPs, and rescheduling of conferences-Time is the greatest barrier."

Caseload concerns were the second most mentioned barrier when looking at the number of responses by participant group. Responses were placed in this category if caseload, number of students, or behavior were mentioned. Principals reported no positive or neutral responses and 20 negative responses. Mild disabilities special education teachers responded with no positive or neutral responses and 17 negative responses. Special education directors provided no positive or neutral responses and eight negative responses concerning caseload as a barrier. The number of responses for principals and special education was almost equal and most responses for all subject groups were recorded as negative. The following responses exemplify caseload concerns:

- "Too many students to be responsible for implementing IEPs, then more at risk students are included into the small groups."
- "The grade span is vast and all students with IEPs at all grade levels are supported by one or two licensed special education teachers."
- "Possibly missing servicing special education students when dealing with difficult situations with other students."
- "Student mobility. Extra workload, for example, private school caseload."

Percentages from Table 32 show school expectations were mentioned by more mild disabilities special education teachers than principals or special education directors. I put responses in this category that mentioned ideas about school climate, school culture, and staff

perceptions of role expectations. Principals gave no positive responses, one neutral response, and three negative responses. Mild disabilities special education teachers provided one positive response, no neutral responses, and 24 negative responses. Special education directors reported no positive or neutral responses, and three negative responses regarding expectations. The following statements reflect views about school expectations:

- "What the general education teacher thinks a special education teacher's role is in his/her classroom."
- "Often times the special education teachers are not seen as "real teachers" within the building."
- "Special education teachers are perceived to be the only ones to provide services to students in the general education class."
- "The responsibilities and expectations for an elementary resource teacher can be very demanding and taxing."

Other barriers discussed by survey respondents included: staffing and/or budget, curriculum, and no barriers. Percentages from Table 32 show principals and special education directors are almost equally concerned about staffing and/or budgets. Descriptors for staffing/budget barriers centered on: hiring practices, enough personnel, and limited money and other resources. Curriculum concerns included: core instruction vs IEP goals, and standardized testing scores. One mild disabilities special education teacher reported there were no barriers because of the way in which services were developed for the school.

Summary

When asked about the role of the special education teacher, six separate categories were found to be associated with the role of a special education teacher. Qualitative data indicated a

majority of respondents viewed mild disabilities special education teachers as an interventionist, student assistance team member, or consultant. An explanation of role duties demonstrated many mild disabilities special education teachers work with general education students struggling with academics even though these students are not considered to be on their caseload.

Qualitative data indicated most of the respondents saw time/scheduling, caseload, and school expectations as barriers to mild disabilities special education teachers. Across subject groups, responses were negative in tone for the open-ended barriers question. Mild disabilities special education teachers seemed to be more concerned about school expectations (e.g. climate and culture issues) than either principals or special education directors. Conclusions and implications about the qualitative data will occur in chapter five.

Limitations of the Study

Survey participant groups were not evenly matched. Unbalanced data sets may be more difficult to analyze using parametric measures.

Survey wording of "within the duty day" was missing from the survey form distributed to the special education directors. The wording may have affected their responses differently if those words would have been included.

The number of years of experience may have also affected the responses. Respondents with less experience (about five years) may just be developing their practices which might affect their responses. Perhaps each professional has not fully developed their sense of their role within the school setting.

The study may have been affected by the relationship between mild disabilities special education teachers taking the survey from the same building. Two or more mild disabilities

special education teachers from the same building may have collaborated to fill out the survey. The responses may have been a combination of thoughts and perceptions.

Some survey participants were removed from the subject pool at the request of their school district. The opinions of these subjects may have been significantly different than others who completed the survey.

This study may have been affected by the number of elementary mild disabilities special education teachers who were not easily identified through their district's website. Their names were not known and the principals were asked to forward information. Some may not have had the opportunity to receive the information in a timely manner or at all.

Even though the invitation to take the survey was sent to mild disabilities special education teachers and principals from the same building, participant names were kept anonymous so they could not be matched. It is not known how many principals and mild disabilities special education teachers were from the same school.

The principals in my study generally reported more positive perceptions of what is happening within their buildings when compared with the other groups. The principals may have ranked what happens in their buildings higher than what actually occurs. This halo effect may have created a greater difference among opinions (Rasmussen, 2008).

A discrepancy was discovered in how special education directors reported governance type, so that data had to be discarded. Therefore, when directors selected "I don't know," I was not able to determine if those responses came from larger districts. I would hypothesize that directors of larger districts may be more removed from the daily routines of their teachers, but I was not able to substantiate that claim.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the purpose of this exploratory study and provides an overview of methodology and research results. It offers a discussion of the findings as well as conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

Study Purpose

In elementary schools, mild disabilities special education teachers are important stakeholders and are expected to perform many roles. Since the introduction of No Child Left Behind, increased pressure has been put on schools and its personnel. Schools have become responsible for ensuring that all students are moving forward academically and mild disabilities special education teachers may also be used to assist academically weak general education students. Because mild disabilities special education teachers may be used in different ways, they may experience difficulties with defining the special education teachers' roles, having time for and scheduling interventions, finding appropriate professional development, and feeling supported by school administrators and staff.

My research study explored the perceptions of mild disabilities special education teachers, elementary school principals, and special education directors concerning the roles, support issues, time/scheduling constraints, and professional development issues faced when utilizing elementary mild disabilities special education teachers. My research questions were:

1. What role expectations exist for mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?
2. What barriers exist concerning the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school setting?

Methodology Overview

Qualtrics was used to create a 31 item survey with two open-ended questions, disseminate the survey, and collect the data. I used a Likert scale format and created survey items in the subject categories of: Roles, Time/Scheduling, Support, and Professional Development. My open-ended questions were related to mild disabilities special education teachers' roles and barriers affecting the use of special education teachers in elementary schools.

The study's population was developed using a stratified sampling procedure, which defined the sample population through the filters of K-5 or K-6 schools as well as special education governance type. I selected elementary principals and mild disabilities special education teachers from 766 K-5 or K-6 schools from across Indiana to participate in this study. The special education directors' names were taken from a list of Special Education Planning District contacts. After I completed sampling procedures, subject populations consisted of 68 special education administrators, 286 elementary school principals, and 380 mild disabilities special education teachers.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if significant differences existed among population means. Other tests used to analyze results were: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances, Welch and Brown-Forsythe Tests of Equality of Means, Bonferroni Test, and the Dunnett T3 Test. A Two-Way ANOVA was used to analyze possible interactions and effects of the factors of age, highest degree attained, and years in current position upon responses. Additionally an ANOVA was used for the factor analysis of each survey item.

Data were also analyzed according to descriptive statistics and responses to my open-ended questions. I developed two coding charts (See Appendix H and Appendix I) to assist with data analysis of the open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were:

1. What barriers exist concerning the use of special education teachers within the elementary schools setting?
2. What is the role of the special education teacher in respect to Response to Intervention (RtI) or helping general education students who demonstrate academic struggles?

Surveys were disseminated through Qualtrics and the Internet to 734 subjects: 190 were returned which corresponded to a 26% return rate and181 were able to be analyzed.

Summary of Findings

Quantitative data analysis through an ANOVA showed significant differences among mild disabilities special education teachers, elementary school principals, and special education directors for the support, time/scheduling, and professional development data sets. I discovered no significant differences between survey participants for the roles data set, which indicated overall agreement with survey items. Post hoc testing demonstrated which differences among the subject population were significant for the support, time/scheduling, and professional development data sets. A Two-way ANOVA depicted an interaction between age and educational level for the roles data set and no other two factor interactions were discovered. The ANOVAs completed for each survey item showed significant differences among survey participants on many survey items for the roles, support, time/scheduling, and professional development data sets. Post hoc testing delineated between which participants significant differences occurred.

Qualitative data analysis produced six common categories for the open-ended question concerning the roles of the special education teacher in relation to assisting struggling general education students. Survey respondents mentioned the categories of interventionist, student

assistance team member, and consultant the most. Including general education students in small group instruction or assisting when already in the general education classroom was mentioned by many of the respondents across subject groups.

Six common subjects were also found for the open-ended question concerning barriers facing mild disabilities special education teachers. The majority of responses across subject groups had negative connotations. Respondents referenced the subjects of time/scheduling, caseload, and school expectations the most. Mild disabilities special education teachers reported school expectations were a barrier more than principals and special education administrators.

Data Analysis Discussion

My survey explored the perceptions of how mild disabilities teachers were used in the elementary school setting according to their roles and what possible barriers affect them. Through my own experience with special education, I observed daily interactions among mild disabilities special education teachers and elementary school staff. I wanted to know if there were differences of opinion among special education directors, elementary school principals, and mild disabilities special education teachers about aspects of the special education teacher's job. Knowing what factors affect mild disabilities special education teachers concerning current educational practices is valuable because the information may assist with special education teacher retention (DeMik, 2008). Through understanding what affects mild disabilities special education teachers, special education directors and elementary school principals can develop proactive plans at the district and building levels.

Roles

Some special education students present unique needs that may require increased amounts of patience, instruction, and planning (Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Lemons, 2013).

Sometimes principals and general education teachers struggle with the placement of special education students within the general education setting because of behavioral or emotional concerns (Praisner, 2003; Valeo, 2008). Special education student behavior is a concern for many new and veteran special education teachers (Billingsley et al., 2011; Hastings & Oakford, 2003; Kauffman & Ring, 2011; Mastropieri, 2001). Student behavior presents unique challenges for mild disabilities special education teachers when those students misbehave and the mild disabilities special education teachers are expected to intervene. While research in the literature review did not indicate specific data concerning being on call, mild disabilities special education teachers who completed my survey strongly indicated they are expected to be on call when special education students exhibit poor behavior choices. The principals were not in strong agreement concerning being on call. Principals may know what needs to be done but are unable or unwilling to take action (Cancio et al., 2013).

Principals have the responsibility of ensuring planning for the school occurs. Principals are responsible for making program and school decisions (Gessler-Werts et al., 2009). All teachers are important stakeholders in the school environment and should be a part of the school-wide-planning committee. Mild disabilities special education teachers should be included with the stakeholder group. In my study, mild disabilities special education teachers did not strongly agree that a mild disabilities special education teacher is a part of the school-wide-planning committee and a number showed disagreement. Principals strongly agreed mild disabilities special education teachers are on the school-wide-planning committee and no principals disagreed. It seems unlikely that the mild disabilities special education teacher and principal respondents were all from different schools. Nothing in the literature review addressed the possible differences in responses for this survey item. Other researchers indicated special

education teachers felt more isolated than general education teachers (Shoho & Katims, 1998) indicating a lack of connection. Perhaps, mild disabilities special education teachers do not stay on school-wide planning committees or they decline when invited to join.

It is important for Indiana special education students to participate in the general education curriculum because they are expected to take the ISTEP+ test, IREAD, Acuity, and other progress monitoring school district assessments. There is an increased expectation for mild disabilities special education teachers to assist students with a variety of disabilities in many different settings (Mastropieri, 2001). This means mild disabilities special education teachers may need to push into the general education classroom to assist students or schedule small group instruction so that large group classroom instruction is not disrupted for the special education students. In my study, mild disabilities special education teachers were divided concerning having time for pushing into the classroom as well as scheduling small groups. Principals felt the mild disabilities special education teachers had the time available for both. Special education directors were also divided concerning time to push into the classroom. Scheduling interventions and teaching special education students were found to be frustrating for special education teachers because of time constraints (DeMik, 2008; Kaff, 2004). Principals feel there is enough time during the day to schedule the interventions. Principals may not understand what the mild disabilities special education teacher does and the time involved to complete tasks (Billingsley, 2004). Principals may not have complete understanding of the variables affecting scheduling.

Collaboration is important if general education and mild disabilities special education teachers are going to meet the needs of special education and at risk general education students. Researchers reported when special education and general education teachers collaborated using a structured collaboration plan, students improved behaviorally and academically (Hunt et al.,

2003). Mild disabilities special education teachers reported they did not have time within their duty day to collaborate with general education teachers and paraprofessionals. Principals and special education directors felt there was time. Collaboration is supported when principals purposefully build common planning time into the master schedule (Ogletree, 2008). The principal may see contractual planning time as being appropriate for collaboration purposes, but it may not be specifically scheduled.

Mild disabilities special education teachers may be expected to attend school-wide professional development because it pertains to all students within the building. Berry et al. (2011) reported special education teachers asked for professional development opportunities to improve their ability to work with students in the general education setting. Principals strongly agreed and no principals were in disagreement mild disabilities special education teachers are expected to attend school-wide professional development because it pertains to all students. Special education directors did not strongly agree but no special education directors disagreed. There was nothing in the literature review pertaining to principals' or special education directors' views on school-wide professional development. The principal is the educational leader of the school and is responsible for developing professional development opportunities for the staff. Perhaps, special education directors were not sure because of the immense responsibility some of them have due to large or multiple school districts (Brown Cash, 2013). Special education directors may be a little removed from the daily operations of elementary schools because of their governance type. There may be special education staff in many schools across one school district or in many schools across several school districts.

Barriers

Professional development is important for mild disabilities special education teachers as well as other staff. Berry (2012) suggested professional development can assist general education and special education teachers with defining respective teaching roles and responsibilities. Mild disabilities special education teachers in my study reported those types of professional opportunities were not available for new mild disabilities special education teachers at the district level. Principals and special education directors felt there were district level professional development opportunities available for new special education teachers concerning their roles and responsibilities.

Other district level professional development opportunities may include collaboration with general education teachers. Ogletree (2008) reported a lack of training in the area of collaboration increases the difficulties faced by special education teachers trying to implement inclusive practices. Mild disabilities special education teachers reported district level professional development on collaboration with general education teachers was not available. Principals and special education directors indicated weak agreement that these professional development opportunities existed.

In many school districts, paraprofessionals assist with educating students and mild disabilities special education teachers may have the role of directing paraprofessionals to assist with special education interventions. These teachers may not have had any training concerning how to work with paraprofessionals effectively. Mckenzie (2011) found paraprofessionals improved their confidence and skill level after participating in a professional development program designed for them. Mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors specified this type of professional development was not available at the district level.

Principal respondents were almost equally split regarding this type of district level professional development.

Professional development is important if mild disabilities special education teachers are going to successfully navigate through their jobs. Special education teachers have different obstacles and concerns than general education teachers and should have their own induction process (Thornton et al., 2007). It seems the disagreement about district level professional development may be related to its type. Perhaps the mild disabilities special education teachers received district level professional development not appropriate for their specific needs. Sometimes special education teachers may be expected to train classroom paraprofessionals (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). These teachers may require professional development opportunities created for working with paraprofessionals or collaboration with general education teachers.

Principals are responsible for the professional development opportunities available at their elementary schools. Special education teachers who stay in the special education profession valued professional development opportunities concerning classroom management, observing veteran teachers, and planned meetings with other special educators (Swanson Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). The principal directs the professional development the school needs and should consider special education needs when guiding school professional development. Mild disabilities special education teachers disagreed with principals and special education directors that professional development with special education students in mind occurs at the building level. Special education teachers may leave the special education field because of a lack of collegial, principal, and district support as well as lack of appropriate staff development (Thronton et al., 2007). Building level professional development may be occurring but it may not be viewed as special education specific.

Another barrier facing mild disabilities special education teachers is a lack of building level professional development about collaboration with general education teachers and paraprofessionals. Professional development opportunities are vital because special education teachers need to learn how to navigate through and assist students in the general education setting (Idol, 2006; Ketron, 2007, Mastropieri, 2001; Viel-Ruma et al., 2010). These types of activities include directing paraprofessionals who assist special education students in the general education setting. Mild disabilities special education teachers reported professional development highlighting collaboration with general education teachers was not provided for them at the building level. Principals and special education directors were in agreement these professional development activities occurred. Concerning professional development with paraprofessionals, mild disabilities special education teachers strongly felt these opportunities were not created at the building level. Principals and special education directors showed some agreement this does occur at the building level. Professional development should be aligned with special education teachers' needs (Thornton et al., 2007). There might be a difference of opinion concerning the definition of collaboration or the need for this type of professional development.

Because of the need for students to participate in the general education curriculum, collaboration has become important between general education teachers and mild disabilities special education teachers. The process of collaboration allows teachers to share their expertise and support students' progress (Hunt et al., 2003). Mild disabilities special education teachers in my study reported agreement with a number expressing disagreement concerning the opportunities to meet with general education teachers and discuss students' Individualized Educational Plans. Principals strongly agreed there were collaboration opportunities while directors were evenly divided.

Because special education students are in a general education teacher's classroom, it is important for general education teachers to provide input regarding a special education student's IEP. Berry (2012) found a sense of job satisfaction and effectiveness improved when special education teachers and general education teachers shared responsibility for students. Collaborating to develop an IEP is one of those shared responsibilities. Most mild disabilities special education teachers reported agreement while principals strongly agreed general education teachers collaborate for IEP development. Special education directors did not exhibit agreement or disagreement because their responses were evenly divided between the two choices.

Collaboration between the general education teacher and mild disabilities special education teachers is important because it helps the students academically. Special education teachers desired for consultation and co-planning time with general education teachers to be scheduled (Jennings Otto, 2006; Kaff, 2004). There may be time allotted for general education teacher planning, but it might not coincide with the planning time of the mild disabilities special education teachers and it might not be specific. Principals know this planning opportunity exists, but may not be aware of specific scheduling needs.

People need to feel valued and supported if they are to be satisfied with their job. Sometimes special education teachers leave their position or special education field because of a lack of administrative or collegial support and school climate (Thornton et al., 2007). Principals strongly agreed that general education teachers are supportive of the efforts of the special education teachers within their buildings while special education directors did not strongly agree. The mild disabilities special education teachers' responses indicated stronger agreement than the special education directors. It seems in general, mild disabilities special education teachers feel general education teachers support their efforts.

There are many general education teachers within the school who interact with mild disabilities special education teachers in an elementary school. Identified support sources for mild disabilities special education teachers are administrators, general education teachers, related service providers, parents, and special education director (Berry, 2012). The culture of the school may be supportive or non-supportive of mild disabilities special education teachers. When teachers feel supported, they have a higher level of job satisfaction (Berry, 2012). Principals strongly agreed that mild disabilities special education teachers feel supported by staff within the school. Mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors were in agreement.

Special education teachers feel supported when principals show they are respected and appreciated (Ketron, 2007; Prather-Jones, 2011). Perhaps the principals feel strongly because they attempt to show support and appreciation towards the mild disabilities special education teachers and all staff. Principals are responsible for the climate of the school and for the previous two survey items they strongly agreed and few disagreed. Each of these involves a climate of support for the special education teacher. Perhaps principals want the climate to be supportive and may not see any signs of an unsupportive climate.

Mild disabilities special education teachers may be expected to assist at risk general education students through instructional interventions and monitor their progress through diagnostic assessment (Van Garderen et al, 2009). Because of time and scheduling constraints, small intervention groups lead by the mild disabilities special education teachers may become large groups when struggling general education students are added. Specific research regarding the increase in group size due to this role was not in the literature review. In my study, principals reported these groups do not grow in size because of additional students while mild

disabilities special education teachers disagreed. Mild disabilities special education teachers reported this as a scheduling barrier for them. If schools use special education teachers for RtI interventions, it could affect the number of students in their groups or the focus of their interventions (Gessler Werts et al., 2009). In response to my RtI open-ended question, it was also reported by a number of respondents at risk general education students are placed in small groups with special education students. There is potential for small special education intervention groups to become larger.

Time for collaboration with general education teachers can be difficult for mild disabilities special education teachers. Not having enough planning time was one of several reasons why special education teachers leave the profession (Demik, 2008; Kaff, 2004; Plash and Piotrowski, 2012). Mild disabilities special education teachers who took my survey reported they did not have adequate time within their duty day for planning and collaboration with general education teachers to develop students' IEPs. Principal's agreed there was time for IEP collaboration. Special education directors were split between agreement and disagreement. Because of increased accountability concerning special education students, collaboration is increasingly important between general education and special education teachers (Lingo et al., 2011). Collaboration about special education students is a part of mild disabilities special education and general education teachers' responsibilities and it needs to occur during the course of the work day. During the day, the administrator may have competing priorities and be unavailable or inattentive to teachers' needs (Cancio et al., 2013). The principals and special education directors may not realize there is not time within the duty day to complete all job responsibilities.

Special education students do not exist in a bubble; they attend class with their peers in the general education setting. All special education students have Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) and general education staff is expected to follow the recommendations within the IEP. Mild disabilities special education teachers indicated agreement that general education teachers follow IEP recommendations. All principal respondents agreed that IEP recommendations are followed by general education teachers. Special education directors indicated weak agreement and four responded with "I don't know." Special education teachers may be able to manage the needs of special education students more effectively when special education and general education teachers provide helpful support (Berry, 2012). Principals may attempt to create a climate of support for special education students, encourage the general education teachers to follow IEP recommendations, and assume recommendations are being followed by the staff.

In an elementary school, the principal needs to know about what occurs in his/her school. Principals who are flexible find the time to meet with and listen to teachers and find ways to be supportive (Ogletree, 2008). Meetings are an important way for communication to occur concerning special education concerns. Mild disabilities special education teachers agreed principals were available to meet and scheduled some special education meetings. Mild disabilities special education teachers disagreed principals regularly schedule meetings to discuss special education concerns. All principal respondents agreed they were available to meet with mild disabilities special education teachers and strongly agreed they scheduled meetings. Principals also strongly agreed they regularly scheduled meetings with mild disabilities special education teachers. Special education directors were not in strong agreement that principals

were available or scheduled meetings. They disagreed that principals regularly scheduled meetings and four indicated "I don't know."

When special education teachers have meaningful, practical conversations with principals, they do not feel isolated from other teachers and stress is reduced (Gersten et al., 2001; Jennings Otto, 2006). Principals strongly agreed they are available for meetings, schedule meetings and regularly schedule meetings. This puts them in a more positive and supportive position of their staff. It is interesting mild disabilities special education teachers or special education directors did not view scheduled meeting time in such a positive manner. Ketron (2007) recommended "in order to maintain retention, the schools should continue meaningful dialogue with their special needs teachers (p. 131).

Some mild disabilities teacher respondents noted school expectations as a barrier to being used effectively when responding to the open-ended questions about barriers. Mild disabilities special education teachers and general education teachers must navigate through the school culture and develop their identity within the school environment. Special education teacher job satisfaction and effectiveness improved when special education and general education teachers shared responsibility for the education of students and if the principal and general education teachers understood the special education teacher's roles and responsibilities (Berry, 2012). Many mild disabilities special education teachers reported they felt supported by the school staff. The mild disabilities special education teachers may feel support is not a school expectation.

It is important for the mild disabilities special education teacher to feel like a part of the staff. School committees are a way for mild disabilities special education teachers to be a part of the school staff. In my study mild disabilities special education teachers and special education directors demonstrated agreement while principals demonstrated strong agreement that mild

disabilities special education teachers have time to be on school committees. There is no specific research evidence in the literature review indicating if special education teachers have time to be on school committees. Mild disabilities special education teachers may not see school committees as an extra responsibility if they choose which committee to join. When barriers or frustrations were mentioned in research studies, school committees were not mentioned. Three things special education teachers wanted to change about their job were size of classes, amount of paperwork, and amount of time spent planning (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). The special education teacher may feel there is not time for committees because of the other job demands.

Planning time within the duty day of the teacher is important and there may be contractual planning time required for teachers. Mild disabilities special education teachers often have students at multiple grade levels with varied ability levels. Kaff (2004) found mild disabilities special education teachers wanted a consistently scheduled time for planning. In my study, mild disabilities special education teachers reported they do not have time within their duty day to plan small group lessons. Principals and special education directors agreed planning time for small group lessons exists within their duty day.

Overall scheduling students, lesson planning, IEP development, and progress monitoring take time. Mild disabilities special education teachers become frustrated when there seems to be little time during the day to complete required tasks (Billingsley, 2004; DeMik, 2008: Shea, 2010). Mild disabilities special education teachers strongly agreed they struggle with scheduling students, planning lessons, developing IEPs, and monitoring progress. Principals and special education directors were not in strong agreement with the mild disabilities special education teachers.

Having time for planning and other school duties or special education job responsibilities is a barrier for many mild disabilities special education teachers. The principals and special education directors may not be aware of the mild disabilities special education teachers' schedules within the school. Principals may approach special education teachers with a hands-off attitude so they might not be aware of the struggles. Principals may see their role as one of being available, encouraging, and non-interfering (Valeo, 2008).

Unanticipated Analysis Discoveries

There was a noted trend of principal respondents in which all agreed or just a few disagreed with the survey items. It seems principals strongly agreed to survey items that put them in a more positive light. Some of the survey items dealt directly with subjects for which principals would be responsible such as being available for and scheduling meetings to discuss special education concerns or special education students. Principals may see the whole picture of the building versus small items of concern. Overall, there may be more positive interactions occurring within the school.

I was surprised to see principals concerned about mild disabilities special education teachers' caseloads. The principals, who responded in this way, saw caseload as a potential barrier for mild disabilities special education teachers. Principals should have a working knowledge of special education and the responsibilities of special education teachers (Prather-Jones, 2011). Qualitative analysis uncovered a number of principals were concerned that caseload issues may detract from mild disabilities special education teachers' abilities to serve students effectively. Some research recommendations have included administrators lowering the staff-child ratio (Jennings Otto, 2006; Stempien & Loeb, 2002). These principals may

understand there is a difference between workload and caseload because of special education responsibilities or the diversity of special education students' needs.

There were no significant differences found concerning survey statements from the roles data set among survey participants. It is surprising because special education teachers may experience role ambiguity when providing special education services to elementary school students while also collaborating with general education teachers (Billingsley, 2004; DeMik, 2008). Perhaps the differences in opinion occur between mild disabilities special education teachers and general education teachers. Several mild disabilities special education teachers who responded to the open-ended question about barriers reported the attitudes of general education teachers were barriers in the elementary school setting.

The survey items for special education directors included the choice of "I don't know" and for a number of survey items special education directors chose this response. Also I noted that for a number of the items, special education directors were evenly divided between agreement and disagreement. It is possible these special education directors did not know the specifics of what happens within the boundaries of their special education supervision responsibilities. These special education directors may have special education staff spread across a large single district or several districts. These special education directors also may have other special education administrative staff directly responsible for these teachers. These special education directors may have responsibilities other than special education supervision (Brown Cash, 2013).

Conclusions

Behavior of some students and its management are concerns for any elementary school staff. Many students with disabilities exhibit challenging behaviors (Kauffman & Ring, 2011).

Mild disabilities special education teachers may feel they are on call because they are responsible for and have taken ownership of special education students on their caseload. General education teachers may be contacting the mild disabilities special education teacher when special education students make poor behavior choices instead of handling the situation personally. Principals may not be aware mild disabilities special education teachers are being summoned when special education students present behavior challenges and do not realize mild disabilities special education teachers are on call.

It seems in general, mild disabilities special education teachers reported general education teachers and other staff support their efforts. When teachers feel satisfied a positive school climate is heightened within the elementary school (Cancio et al., 2013). The positive attitude helps mild disabilities special education teachers get through daily obstacles such as behavior concerns, caseload concerns, paperwork, district paperwork requirements, and IDEA requirements. Teachers who feel supported by the general education staff are more likely to stay in the field of special education (Prather-Jones, 2011). It is good news for the schools and school districts that mild disabilities special education teachers feel supported by staff.

Schools make plans for improvement so that district and state goals can be met. Each school is a separate entity because of its student population demographics. The school-wide plan should be specific and address educational supports, professional development activities, ways to evaluate and track student data, and have a timeline for completion (Lipsky, 2003). All students need to be considered when developing plans for school improvement. Special education teachers want to" have more influence in the decision-making process concerning their students' programs" (Kaff, 2004, p. 15). The mild disabilities special education teacher is a valuable

stakeholder in the process of planning for school-wide improvement because of his/her expertise and should be included on these teams.

One role that mild disabilities special education teachers may have is assisting academically weak general education students through the formal process of RtI or because of the general education teacher's concerns. Mild disabilities special education teachers may assess general education students or assist with RtI and other performance based measures (Billingsley et al., 2011). In my study, many survey respondents observed that mild disabilities special education teachers may act as an interventionist, a team member, or a consultant to RtI or student assistance teams. This is in line with what some scholars suggest needs to happen with the RtI process. Within the school setting blurring of special education responsibilities indicates special education teachers co-teach with general education teachers, lead small group instruction for at risk general education students, and join student assistance teams to assist students experiencing extreme academic difficulties (Fuchs et al., 2010). There is a general recommendation that special education teachers no longer "own" a tier within the RtI process (Fuchs et al., 2010).

Mild disabilities special education teachers no longer provide services only in the resource room setting. They may push into the general education classroom setting as well as schedule small group interventions in a resource room setting. Because special education students are usually spread across different classrooms and grade levels, scheduling can be frustrating. Special education students are also likely to receive services from other professionals adding to the scheduling frustration. Special education teachers feel more powerless and perceive less control over the school environment than their general education counterparts (Shoho & Katims, 1998). Sometimes, general education teachers do not inform

mild disabilities special education teachers of schedule changes and this can be frustrating if the change is permanent.

Finding time for planning small group lessons or collaboration with general education teachers and paraprofessionals within the duty day can be a huge frustration for mild disabilities special education teachers. Collaboration is important because special education students are within the general education classroom and the general education teacher or para professional need to know what to do for special education students. IDEA obliges schools to give special education students access to the curriculum and receive instruction specifically designed to meet their academic and behavioral needs (Brownell et al., 2010). There needs to be collaboration between stakeholders because there is shared responsibility for special education students. Collaboration may also need to take place for lesson planning because special education students are receiving instruction from both general education and mild disabilities special education teachers. Finding time within the duty day for collaboration or lesson planning may be challenging for all involved.

Research conducted by Valeo (2008) reported most general education teachers desired another teacher to take responsibility for special education students in the general education classroom setting. Survey respondents showed some disagreement with those findings. Survey respondents indicated agreement about general education teachers following IEP recommendations. If general education teachers are viewed as following IEP recommendations, it indicates they are taking responsibility for special education students within their classrooms. This is positive for mild disabilities special education teachers because they can feel confident that the needs of special education students are valued and being met while in the general education setting. It encourages a whole school approach to special education that requires all

staff to take responsibility for educating both special education and general education students (Lipsky, 2003).

Special education students are expected to participate in the general education curriculum and the mild disabilities special education teacher cannot oversee every educational aspect of the student's day. The mild disabilities special education teacher requires help determining what skills the special education student has developed and what needs additional intervention and collaboration is necessary between mild disabilities special education teachers and general education teachers and paraprofessionals. When general education and special education teachers collaborate, students improve with academic and behavioral goals because the teachers have time to reflect with one another on an ongoing basis (Hunt et. al., 2003). Time and opportunity for collaboration are important for students' academic and behavioral success.

District or building level professional development opportunities are important for mild disabilities special education teachers because they have such a varied role within the school. Some special education teachers feel isolated from general education teachers and other special education teachers and need increased opportunities to interact with these colleagues in a substantive manner (Gersten et al., 2001). Professional development with special education students or teachers in mind could bridge this gap. Special education should be included when making professional development decisions at the district or building level.

A trend of agreement was noted among the results of principal respondents. A number of times their responses showed total or almost total agreement with survey items. A closer examination of these survey item responses indicated principals painted a more positive picture and were not in agreement with mild disabilities special education teachers' perceptions.

Principals may feel there is a positive climate and culture at their schools and this positive feeling may be related to the halo effect (Rasmussen, 2008).

Recommendations

Many survey item responses showed significant differences of opinion between mild disabilities special education teachers and principals or special education directors. It seems there is a gap between what mild disabilities special education teachers experience and what administrators perceive. Because principals tended to perceive situations in a more positive light and were frequently in disagreement with responses of mild disabilities special education teachers, they might want to develop a deeper understanding of the actual day- to-day experiences mild disabilities special education encounter. Special education directors may be in charge of special education staff working for a small school district, large school district or several school districts because of the special education governance type. Principals may also have a relatively small school or larger one that makes it difficult to know everything about their building. Principals and special education directors might be removed from the daily operations because of their job responsibilities. Principals and special education directors may want to conduct school walk-throughs or conduct audits to explore what is happening within the schools with special education staff.

Response to Intervention models may look differently depending upon the school's or district's interpretation because each has unique characteristics and needs (Hoover & Love, 2011). If mild disabilities special education teachers are going to fill the role of RtI or student assistance team interventionist, consultant, or team member, administrative leaders may need to consider what workload versus caseload looks like for their staff. More responsibility may take away from the instructional duties associated with identified special education students or

increase special education small group intervention size. Stress may be added to the mild disabilities special education teacher's job if additional responsibilities cause major problems with time and scheduling. Mild disabilities special education teachers who have more responsibility with assisting students through the RtI or student assistance team process may need to have fewer students on their caseloads because of their increased workload. Both general education and special education administrative leaders might want to guide the RtI process so that a clear model for the district emerges.

If the mild disabilities special education is participating on RtI or student assistance teams, their roles may not be clearly defined. The function and role of the special education teacher is not always clearly defined within RtI models (Wyatt-Ross, 2007). When roles are clearly defined, expectations are clear and stress is reduced. Both special education and building administrators may want to assist with defining the roles of the mild disabilities special education teacher within the RtI or student assistance team process.

Behavior presents concerns for all staff members because it interrupts the learning environment. The principal's leadership directly affects the climate and culture of a school (Thornton et al., 2007). Principals need to be aware of what is occurring within the building for all students. When mild disabilities special education teachers are called to deal with a behavior issue, instructional time gets taken away from other special education students. The role of the principal is critical to the academic performance of all students, which includes special education students (Lynch, 2012). Behavior plans may need to be developed or reviewed for those students. Principals and special education directors are partially responsible to make sure behavior plans are being followed with fidelity. Principals may need to audit their schools to find out what is happening when special education students make poor behavior choices within

the general education setting. Special education directors may want to also audit their special education department to discover what happens when a special education student exhibits challenging behaviors. Perhaps, both administrators could have a discussion about the topic and resolve the conflict of mild disabilities special education teachers being on call.

Support and feeling supported are important aspects that may encourage mild disabilities special education teachers to stay in their current position or special education field. Special education teachers reported higher levels of job satisfaction when helpful support was provided by special education administrators, building administrators, and general education teachers (Berry, 2012). Many mild disabilities teachers in this study reported feelings of support from school staff and some did not feel supported. If school systems want to retain special education teachers, administrative leadership needs to recognize and define what helpful support means to their special education staff. An audit could be completed that would shed light on the definition of helpful support at the building or district level.

Planning for school improvement is a huge undertaking for an elementary school. The principal is the educational leader in charge of the school-wide planning process and has many things to consider when inviting grade level staff to participate. Principals should consider the needs of special education students when guiding school improvement plans (Lipsky, 2003). Principals can accomplish this through inviting mild disabilities special education teachers to sit on school-wide planning teams. Special education directors could encourage principals to invite mild disabilities special education teachers to participate.

Mild disabilities special education teachers may need to schedule a time to push into the classroom as well as schedule small group interventions that do not detract from classroom whole group instruction. This scheduling can be frustrating because of the school's master

schedule as well as the schedules of other professionals who need to work with the special education students. Frustration may occur because the mild disabilities special education teachers teach under conditions for which they have little control (Vannest & Parker, 2009). The mild disabilities special education teacher does not have control over the master schedule or if the general education teacher decides to change their schedule for the day or year. Building administrators may need to take into account what special education interventions may look like when developing the master schedule. Principals should hold general education teachers responsible for honoring the mild disabilities special education teacher's schedule because changes could disrupt the entire special education schedule. Special education directors might encourage building principals to think a little more about the needs of the special education students within their buildings.

Both general education and special education staff need to work together to develop knowledge and skills so they can identify and discuss their particular needs (Praisner, 2003). Regular opportunities for collaboration among special education teachers, paraprofessionals, general education teachers, special education administrators, and building administrators would promote greater understanding. Some reported benefits of collaboration are reduced isolation, shared responsibility for diverse students, learned new skills, and increased enjoyment in teaching (Lipsky, 2003). As the field of special education moves forward, it is important to purposefully plan for effectively educating all students. Berry (2012) asserted through release time or flexible scheduling, time for collaboration meetings between teachers could be found. If special education and general education teachers do not have the time to physically meet, email could be used as an alternative and a virtual meeting could take place to discuss students' academic or behavioral progress or develop IEP goals. Both special education and general

education administrators may benefit from recognizing the power of collaboration and encourage its development and use within the district and schools.

While principals may be available for meetings to discuss special education concerns, many may not regularly schedule meetings and they may be unaware of what is going on with special education teachers or students. Berry (2012) proposed principals provide an exchange of professional support through special education and grade-level team meetings. Some research has shown when "special educators engage in meaningful substantive conversations with administrators and staff at their school about their jobs, role dissonance and stress is reduced (Gersten et al., 2001, p. 560). Administrators may want to consider scheduled meetings for special education staff.

How expectations are defined by general education teachers and mild disabilities special education teachers is perplexing because special education teachers felt supported in these research results and other research indicates support concerns. Some mild disabilities special education teacher respondents indicated school expectations were a barrier for them in response to the open-ended questions about barriers. Some of those concerns involved what general education teachers expected from the mild disabilities special education teachers. Purposeful and thoughtful role development offers a clearer more defined sense of purpose for special education teachers (Billingsley, 2004). Continued research involving mild disabilities special education teachers and general education teachers specifically delving into defining role expectations would be beneficial. Perhaps special education directors or principals might audit their staff and find out what the real and unspoken expectations are for the school or district.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is intended to be a general education initiative and mild disabilities special education teachers may assist with interventions, progress monitoring, and

assessment of general education students. Hazelkorn et al. (2011) reviewed the literature and found the majority of journal articles regarding RtI target special educators instead of general education teachers. Survey respondents described the roles of mild disabilities special education teachers as interventionist, team member, or consultant concerning RtI or general education student assistance. Other scholars suggest the lines between special education and general education need to be blurred and special education should blend itself into the tiered RtI structure (Fuchs et al., 2010). It may be important to develop future research studies and delve into what RtI looks like across Indiana so that roles and expectations can be defined.

The mild disabilities special education teachers, special education directors, and elementary school principals have a wealth of information regarding special education services. My survey results were informative concerning specific job aspects of mild disabilities special education teachers. A mixed methods study would bring forth more in-depth understanding of roles, support, time/scheduling, and professional development issues facing mild disabilities special education teachers. Survey items that touched upon significant differences among mild disabilities special education teachers, principals, and special education directors could be expanded to gather more specific information and discover why respondents agreed or disagreed.

Summary

Like some of their special education students, mild disabilities special education teachers need to feel they have a voice so that they will not feel isolated or underappreciated. We know mild disabilities teachers may leave the special education field, transfer to another school, or choose work in another school district when they view working conditions as unrealistic, inadequate, and unsupportive (Crockett, 2004). It is important for school systems to consider what might be done to encourage special education teacher retention.

Washburn -Moses (2005) stated “as a field special education needs to prioritize goals for students with disabilities and design programs and teacher roles and responsibilities around these goals” (p. 155). Special education roles and responsibilities can be better defined and collaboration encouraged through staff development plans. Improved professional development opportunities for mild disabilities special education teachers may remove the barriers to assisting special education students and general education students who struggle with academics.

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APPENDIX A

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on 6/24/2013

Learner: Kathleen Mentz (username: kamentz)
Institution: Ball State University
Contact Information 56044 Riverdale Drive
Elkhart, IN 46514 USA
Department: Educational Leadership
Phone: (574) 215-5798
Email: kpm7999@comcast.net

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher: Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 06/23/13 (Ref # 10124771)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction	04/20/13	3/3 (100%)
Students in Research	04/20/13	9/10 (90%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	04/20/13	4/5 (80%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	04/20/13	5/5 (100%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	04/21/13	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	04/21/13	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBR	04/21/13	4/5 (80%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	04/27/13	5/5 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBR	04/27/13	4/4 (100%)
Research with Children - SBR	04/27/13	4/4 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	04/28/13	4/4 (100%)
International Research - SBR	04/28/13	3/3 (100%)
Internet Research - SBR	05/04/13	4/5 (80%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections	06/15/13	2/5 (40%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees	06/19/13	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	06/23/13	5/5 (100%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research	06/23/13	3/3 (100%)
Ball State University	04/06/13	no quiz

APPENDIX B

Institutional Review Board

DATE: August 27, 2013

TO: Kathleen Mentz

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 483728-1

TITLE: The Utilization Of Mild Disabilities Special Education Teachers In Elementary Schools

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: August 27, 2013

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on August 27, 2013 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Editorial notes:

1. Exempt

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact please contact Jennifer Weaver at 765-285-5034 or jmweaver@bsu.edu if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.

APPENDIX C

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
2000 University Avenue
Muncie, IN 47306-0155
Phone: 765-285-5070
DATE: December 3, 2013
TO: Kathleen Mentz
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB protocol # 483728-2
TITLE: The Utilization Of Mild Disabilities Special Education Teachers In Elementary Schools
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification
ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION DATE: December 3, 2013
REVIEW TYPE: **EXEMPT**
The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on December 3, 2013 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.
Exempt Categories:
Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educations practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
Category 2: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior
Category 3: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category 2, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
Category 4: Research involving the collection of study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
Category 5: Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under these programs.
Category 6: Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if

wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed which contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Editorial Notes:

1. Modification Approved

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact (ORI Staff) if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.

Bryan Byers, PhD/Chair
Institutional Review Board

Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/Director
Office of Research Integrity

APPENDIX D

Ball State University

Dear Educator,
I am a doctoral candidate in the Education Research Program at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. I am asking you to participate in a research study entitled:

The Utilization of Mild Disabilities Special Education Teachers In Elementary Schools

My research is focused on the engagement of mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school setting. I want to compare perceptions of principals, special education administrators, and special education teachers concerning: academic assistance for special education and at risk students, mild disabilities special education teacher roles, professional development, and time/scheduling constraints.

You have been chosen because you are a mild disabilities special education teacher, special education administrator, or elementary principal. Your knowledge and experience will provide insight to a better understanding of special education services across Indiana during these changing times.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Ball State University in Muncie, IN. Precautions have been taken to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Subject names and addresses will be destroyed. Access to the online survey will occur through the Qualtrics secure website. Your name or place of employment will not be attached to the data after you take the survey. Results will be reported in terms of trends for the subject groups of special education teachers, special education administrators, and elementary school principals.

This survey is voluntary in nature; your district is not requiring your participation. There is no anticipated risk to you for participating in this survey. There are no anticipated benefits for participating in this study but your responses will enhance understanding of special education services across Indiana. If a question makes you feel uncomfortable, you may skip it. You may withdraw from participating at any time.

Please follow the link provided to access the Qualtrics secure website to take the survey. The survey should take you approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Ball State University is required to protect the fair treatment of participants and that research is completed in an ethical and legal manner. If you have questions regarding your rights concerning this survey, you may contact Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.
Thank you for your participation in this research endeavor.

Principle Investigator
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APPENDIX E

Survey for Special Education Teachers and Principals

Special Education Teacher Roles	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The special education teacher(s) is/are expected to assist with at risk general education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The special education teacher is expected to incorporate at risk general education students into small group instruction with special education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. A special education teacher (not including speech language pathologist) is a part of a student assistance team (a team of teachers who formally meet to develop interventions for at risk general education students).	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. The special education teacher is expected to be "on call" when special education students need behavior intervention.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. A special education teacher is a part of the school wide planning team.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Special education teachers are expected to be on data teams with general education teachers to look at student data (acuity, classroom formative assessments, ISTEP+) and develop interventions for students who are not being successful with state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Special education teachers are expected to push in to classrooms to assist special education and general education students as well as having small group instruction groups with special education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Time/ Scheduling	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. Special education teachers have time to push in to the classroom to support special education and at risk general education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Some special education small group instruction (3-5 students) has become a large group	☐	☐	☐	☐

because at risk students have been placed in those groups for intervention purposes because there is not available time to work with those students.				
10. Special education teachers have time for pull-out small group instruction which does not detract from in class large group instruction. (special education students do not miss large group instruction lesson with the general education teacher).	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Special education teachers have time to be on school committees.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Special education teachers are able to make time within their duty day for planning and collaborating with general education teachers in order to develop Individualized Educational Plans for students	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Special education teachers are able to make time within their duty day for planning small group lessons.	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Special education teachers have time for collaboration with paraprofessionals and general education teachers within their duty day.	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Special education teachers struggle with scheduling students, lesson planning, IEP development, and progress monitoring because of time and scheduling constraints.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Support	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
16. The principal is available to meet and discuss special education concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. The principal schedules meetings to discuss special education concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. The principal regularly schedules meetings to discuss special education students and/or concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. The general education teachers are supportive of the efforts of the special education teachers within my building.	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. General education and special education teachers have opportunities to meet and	☐	☐	☐	☐

collaborate/discuss special education students' IEPs.				
21. General education teachers follow IEP recommendations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. General education teachers collaborate with special education teachers to develop IEPs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Special education teachers feel supported by staff within the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Professional Development	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
24. Special education teachers are encouraged to seek out independent professional development opportunities (outside of the district's or building's initiatives).	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Special education teachers are expected to attend school wide professional development because it applies to all students within the building.	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Professional development has been developed concerning collaboration between special education and general education teachers for our building.	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. Professional development with special education students in mind according to the needs of the faculty has been created for our building.	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. Professional development on how teachers can effectively work with teacher's assistants/paraprofessionals has been developed for our building.	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. New special education teachers receive professional development for expected roles/responsibilities at the building level.	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Special education teachers receive district level professional development on collaboration with general education teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. Special education teachers receive district level professional development on effectively working with paraprofessionals.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open Ended Questions:

1. What barriers exist concerning the use of special education teachers within the school setting?

2. What is the role of the special education teacher in respect to Response to Intervention (RtI) or helping general education students who demonstrate academic struggles?

Demographic Questions:

Please check the square next to your response:

1. □ Male □Female
2. Age: □ 21-25 □26-30 □31-35 □36-40 □41-45 □46-50 □51+
3. Years in current position:

   □< 1 yr. □1-5 yrs. □6-10 yrs. □11-15 yrs. □16-20 yrs. □21-25 yrs.

   □26-30yrs. □31+ yrs.
4. How many buildings do you work in?
5. For Principals: How many teachers are you responsible for?
6. For Special Education Teachers: How many students are on your caseload?
7. Education Level: (Please check highest degree obtained)

   □ BA or BS □ MA or MS □ Ed. D or PhD □ Ed. S
8. Licensure: (Please check all that apply)

   □ Teacher □ Principal □ Director of Exceptional Needs
9. How many students are enrolled at your school?

   □ 100-199 □ 200-299 □ 300-399 □ 400-499 □ 500-599

   □ 600-699 □ 700-799

APPENDIX F

Survey for Special Education Administrators

Special Education Teacher Roles	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
1. Special education teachers are expected to assist with at risk general education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Special education teachers are expected to incorporate at risk general education students into small group instruction with special education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Special education teachers (not including speech language pathologist) are a part of a student assistance team (a team of teachers who formally meet to develop interventions for at risk general education students).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Special education teachers are expected to be “on call” when special education students need behavior intervention.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Special education teachers are a part of school wide planning teams.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Special education teachers are expected to be on data teams with general education teachers to look at student data (acuity, classroom formative assessments, ISTEP+) and develop interventions for students who are not being successful with state standards.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Special education teachers are expected to push in to classrooms to assist special education and general education students as well as having small group instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

groups with special education students.					

Time/ Scheduling	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
8. Special education teachers have time to push in to the classroom to support special education and at risk general education students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Some special education small group instruction (3-5 students) has become a large group because at risk students have been placed in those groups for intervention purposes because there is not available time to work with those students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Special education teachers have time for pull-out small group instruction which does not detract from in class large group instruction. (special education students do not miss large group instruction lesson with the general education teacher).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Special education teachers have time to be on school committees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Special education teachers have time for planning and collaborating with general education teachers in order to develop Individualized Educational Plans for students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Special education teachers have time for planning small group lessons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Special education teachers have time for collaboration with paraprofessionals and general education teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Special education teachers struggle with scheduling students, lesson planning, IEP development, and progress monitoring because of time and scheduling constraints.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Support	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
16. The principal is available to meet and discuss special education concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. The principal schedules meetings to discuss special education concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. The principal regularly schedules meetings to discuss special education students and/or concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. The general education teachers are supportive of the efforts of the special education teachers within the elementary schools.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. General education and special education teachers have opportunities to meet and collaborate/discuss special education students' IEPs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. General education teachers follow IEP recommendations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. General education teachers collaborate with special education teachers to develop IEPs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Special education teachers feel supported by staff within the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Professional Development	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know
24. Special education teachers are encouraged to seek out independent professional development opportunities (outside of the district's or building's initiatives).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Special education teachers are expected to attend school wide professional development because it applies to all students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

within the building.					
26. Professional development has been developed concerning collaboration between special education and general education teachers for the elementary schools.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. Professional development with special education students in mind according to the needs of the faculty has been created for the elementary schools.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. Professional development on how teachers can effectively work with teacher's assistants/paraprofessionals has been developed for the elementary schools.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. New special education teachers receive professional development for expected roles/responsibilities at the building level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Special education teachers receive district level professional development concerning collaboration with general education teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. Special education teachers receive district level professional development on effectively working with paraprofessionals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open Ended Questions:

1. What barriers exist concerning the use of special education teachers within the school setting?
2. What is the role of the special education teacher in respect to Response to Intervention (RtI) or helping general education students who demonstrate academic struggles?

Demographic Questions:

Please check the square next to your response:

1. □ Male □Female
2. Age: □ 21-25 □26-30 □31-35 □36-40 □41-45 □46-50 □51+
3. Years in current position:

   □< 1 yr. □1-5 yrs. □6-10 yrs. □11-15 yrs. □16-20 yrs. □21-25 yrs.

   □26-30yrs. □31+ yrs.
4. How many special education teachers are in your governance type?
5. What is your special education governance type?

   □ Single □ Joint □ Cooperative □ Interlocal
6. Education Level: (Please check highest degree obtained)

   □ BA or BS □ MA or MS □ Ed. D or Ph. D □ Ed. S
7. Licensure: (Please check all that apply)

   □ Teacher □ Principal □ Director of Exceptional Needs

APPENDIX G

Research Questions/Survey Items

Research Questions	Corresponding Survey Items
What role expectations exist for mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary school?	**Roles** 1,2,3 4,5,6,7 **Time/Scheduling** 8,10,11, 12,13,14 **Support** 20,22, **Professional Development** 24,25 **Open-ended response question:** What is the role of the special education teacher in respect to Response to Intervention or helping general education students who demonstrate academic struggles?
What barriers exist concerning the utilization of mild disabilities special education teachers within the elementary schools?	**Time/Scheduling** 8,9,10 11,12,13 14,15 **Support** 16,17,18,19 20,21,22,23 **Professional Development** 26, 27,28, 29,30,31 **Open-ended response question:** What barriers exist concerning the use of special education teachers within the elementary school setting?

APPENDIX H

Barriers Coding Table

Barriers	Special Ed. Admin.	Special Education Admin.	Special Education Admin.	Principal	Principal	Principals	Special Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Neutral**	**Negative**
Time/ Scheduling			3,4,6,7,9, 15,16,17, 19,20,21, 22,24,23, 2			11,18,19, 23,24,27, 32,33,35, 37,38,40, 42,43 9,14,20, 26,29,36, 41,45,16			1,4,5,6,10 11,12,13, 14,16,17, 19,20,21, 27,31,34, 41,50,56, 57,58,60, 44,45,46, 47,80,81, 3,18,23, 24,25,48, 60,62,65, 66,67,69, 78,80
Caseload			12,18,26, 28,13,8, 11,22			1,3,4,5,7, 8,9,10,11, 12,13,31, 34,37,38, 42,45,1, 19,30,22			1,6,7,8,23 30,31,32, 38,40,41, 42,61,65, 39,49,48
School Expectations			1,14,25		21	22,28, 17	51		2,20,26, 28,43,52, 53,54,58, 63,64,71, 74,79,82, 83 ,73, 9,56,6,17, 70,15,35
Staffing and Budget			10,14,26, 28,23			5,14,18 ,40,42,25, 39,44,10			29,33,35, 37,68,72, 14,67,69
Curriculum vs Goals			5,27						13,55,75, 77
No Barriers							76		

Note: Open-ended responses were printed and numbered to assist with the coding process

Survey Open-ended question: What barriers exist concerning the use of special education teachers within the elementary school setting?

APPENDIX I

Roles Coding Table

RtI	Special Education Administrators	Special Education Teachers	Principals
Interventionist	2,7,8,11,13,15, 16,17,20,22, 27,28,9,10,14,4	2,3,4,6,8,14,15,19,21,23 ,26,28,29,30,33,42,43,44, 49,53,59,61,62,64,66,67	4,5,6,7,12,16,19,21 ,22,25,26,27,31,35,37, 42,43,46,47,2,18,22,29 ,30,39,18
Team Member	1,3,7,8,13,15,20, 21,22,25,26,27	5,7,10,12,13,16,19,20,22,24 ,25,27,31,32,40,46,47,48,50, 51,53,55,57,58,59,62,63,66 ,67,71,73,76,79,84	1,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,13,14, 16,17,18,20,24,25,27,28, 29,31,32,33,38,41,42,44, 45,46,47
Consultant	5,8,9,10,12,19,21, 23,24,26	1,2,7,9,10,11,13,18,20, 21,22,24,27,31,33,39,40 ,41,43,45,48,56,57,58, 77,82,86	1,5,8,9,10,11,13,15,19, 25,26,29,33,34,36,41
Not Team Member	6,18	17,68,72,74,80	
Special Ed Only		60,75	
Same as General Education			23

Note: Open-ended responses were printed and numbered to assist with the coding process

Survey open-ended question: What is the role of the special education teacher in respect to Response to Intervention (RtI) or helping general education students who demonstrate academic struggles?

APPENDIX J

Two-Way ANOVA: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance: Roles

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Age/Years In Position	.633	7	173	.728
Age/Education Level.	.502	8	171	.854
Years In Position/Education Level	.569	8	171	.780

Note: Significant at the $p < .05$ level

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance: Support

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Age/Years In Position	1.854	7	173	.080
Age/Education Level	.303	8	171	.964
Years In Position/Educational Level	1.638	8	171	.117

Note: Significant at the $p < .05$ level

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance: Time/Scheduling

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Age/Years In Position	.597	7	173	.758
Age/Education Level	1.178	8	171	.315
Years In Position/Educational Level	1.512	8	171	.156

Note: Significant at the $p < .05$ level

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variance: Professional Development

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Age/Years In Position	.933	7	173	.482
Age/Educational Level	1.883	8	171	.066
Years In Position/Educational Level	1.883	8	171	.065

Note: Significant at the $p < .05$ level